GMA 7 supports 3-day Inquirer Job Market Enhancement Expo, which starts today at Glorietta

UN Security Council demands that North Korea end its ballistic missile program

Tough Pinoy boxer loses title challenge by 9th-round TKO

Fireworks show keeps Mayon villagers awake

By Ephrain Aguilar and Gil Francis G. Arevalo
PDI Visayhorn Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—FLAMING LAVA AND rocks cascaded down the slopes of Mount Mayon, raising risks of a major eruption and putting thousands of villagers on high alert for evacuation.

"If the activities continued in the next few days, we may upgrade the alert level to 4, which means a hazardous eruption

FIREWORKS, A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, July 17, 2006 ## Vol. 21 / No. 219 www.inq7.net

Vestments among Palace gifts, says CBCP official

By Christian Esguerra

BASED ON AN ACCOUNT of an official of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, it appeared that President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration pulled every trick recently

VESTMENTS, A2

Chavez sees RP-US plot in Bolante case

A PHOTOJOURNALIST takes a shot at Mayon Volcano during its "mild and quiet eruption" as seen from Legazpi City. Government volcanologists have raised alert level 3 after observing "lava trickles" (inset) down its slopes.

Defensor: Palace clueless like anyone

By Philip C. Tubeza

FORMER SOLICITOR GENERAL FRANCISCO Chavez yesterday said Malacañang schemed with the United States to keep Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante from testifying in investigations in Manila on allegations a P728-million fertilizer fund was used to buy President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory in the 2004 election.

Malacañang, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the US Embassy have clamped up on the controversy more than a week after Bolante, a former agriculture undersecretary, was reportedly detained in the US immigration facility at San Pedro, Los Angeles, after his visa was reportedly cancelled for still unexplained reasons.

Yesterday, the President's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, again said there was "no news blackout" on the Bolante case.

Defensor said Malacañang, just like himself, was just "clueless" and if anybody really wanted to find out what was going on, he or she should go to the United States and ask authorities there.

Chavez, who exposed the fertilizer fund scam, said that Bolante's reported application for political asylum in the United States after his visa was scratched would effectively allow him to stay there for the next three to five years, untouched by Filipino investigators.

He explained that the whole process of applying for political asylum could take "a minimum of three years and could even last to five years if [Bolante] gets a good American lawyer."

Chavez also pointed out that the Senate, through Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., never requested

CHAVEZ, A2

OFWs' escape routes in Lebanon bombed

By Nikko Dizon

THOUSANDS OF FILIPINOS who may have to flee strife-torn Lebanon will most likely face a difficult and dangerous way out of the capital Beirut because many of their possible escape routes have been bombed and damaged by Israeli forces, an official said.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Gilberto Asuque said the DFA was preparing for "the worst-case scenario" as the war between Israel and Lebanon widened on Sunday.

The conflict has shattered the Middle East peace and pushed world crude oil prices to record levels.

"The only logical contingency plan is to look for a safe haven within Lebanon," Asuque said in a phone interview.

He said the Philippine Embassy had found a Catholic parish in northern Beirut, headed by a Filipino priest, that could serve as an evacuation center.

However, the parish could only accommodate 3,000 Filipinos. There are some 30,000 Filipinos

OFWs' ESCAPE, A4

CBCP letter masterpiece of ecclesiastical hedging

By Amando Doronila

THE JULY 10 PASTORAL LETTER of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has disappointed a sector of public opinion which had expected a sharp rebuke to President Macapagal-Arroyo as she faces a new round of impeachment proceedings when Congress resumes regular session on July 24.

ANALYSIS

Although the CBCP letter reverted on the impeachment issue as its main theme, it left the public in the dark over whether the bishops were exercising their moral authority either to encourage or discourage the fresh impeachment bid in the House of Representatives to determine the "truth" of allegations in the complaint, particularly the charge that Ms Arroyo rigged the 2004 election results.

The letter is a masterpiece of ecclesiastical hedging and equivocation. The document is so ambiguously phrased that anyone

CBCP, A12

PNP starts probing coup financiers

By Luige A. del Puerto and Leila B. Salaverria

ACTING ON PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo's order, the police starting today are summoning for questioning shadowy supporters of alleged plots to overthrow her administration, supposedly including businessmen.

"We have many names ... We may start [inviting] two people and then the rest will follow," Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon said on the phone.

Calderon refused to divulge the identities of those who would be invited for questioning, saying the police were still assessing the information they had.

"In fairness to them, we still have to determine the extent of their participation," Calderon said on the phone. "They might have been in one party for example, but were not really privy to conversations there."

They would be asked why their names cropped up as among those allegedly involved in the anti-Arroyo plot, Calderon said.

"Starting tomorrow (Monday), we will send invitations," the PNP chief said.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonza-

PNP STARTS, A4

Talks with Reds show Magdalo split

By Nikko Dizon

THE MILITARY REBEL GROUP Makabayang Kawal Pilipino (MKP), that negotiated with communist insurgents early this year was formed by repentant Army 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan, emphasizing the divide within the Magdalo rebels that mastered the Oakwood mutiny in 2003, sources in the Armed Forces said.

"Lieutenant San Juan was among the founders of the MKP," one junior officer privy to the movements of restive junior officers told the Inquirer in an interview yesterday. The officer, along with other military sources, requested anonymity, citing security concerns.

On Friday, San Juan announced that he was breaking his ties with the Magdalo and the MKP and swore allegiance to the Constitution and the Armed Forces.

He also apologized for his participation in the Oakwood mutiny and admitted that he had held talks with the Communist Party of the

TALKS, A6

Lesson from killer quake: Don't take life for granted

SONIA Malaarto-Roco. Survivor recounts 36-hour ordeal beneath the rubble.

By Phil Lawrence de Guzman
PDI Research

IT WAS THE EARTHQUAKE, EXACTly 16 years ago yesterday, that shook her life and made her grip on it tighter.

That afternoon of July 16, 1990, Sonia Malaarto-Roco, wife of the late Sen. Raul Roco, was attending a seminar on financial management sponsored by the US Agency for International Development at the university-hotel Nevada in Baguio City.

Nevada was one of the eight hotels leveled by the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that hit the country that day, killing around 1,200 people and destroying at least P10 billion worth of buildings, houses, roads, bridges and other infrastructure facilities.

LESSON, A12

AT LEAST 48 people were believed to have died when an earthquake struck Hotel Nevada, together with other buildings in Baguio City on July 16, 1990.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Subic van driver testifies today

By Tarra V. Quismundo

AFTER MONTHS OUT OF THE PUBLIC EYE, Timoteo Soriano Jr., driver of the van where four American Marines allegedly raped a Filipina woman at the Subic Freeport last year, is set to testify today at the Makati Regional Trial Court.

Soriano, who is the prosecution's 21st witness, is presumably the last key witness of the rivals happened in the fitness area on the night of Nov. 1, 2005.

Lawyer Evalyn Ursua declined to divulge details on how the prosecution panel would approach Soriano's direct examination, stressed out in passing today's presentation.

The court already sent subpoenas to Soriano at his residence in Caloocan City and at the transport service agency where he worked for in Makati City, to inform him of his mandated appearance today (Monday).

Soriano, who was inside the cramped fitness van where complainant "Nicole" was allegedly raped by Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith first discovering of three comrades, became convinced only when he received his mother's assistance claim he had witnessed a gang rape inside the vehicle on the night of the incident.

Soriano alleged that he executed his first affidavit under duress, threatened by Fuquito Torres, chief of Subic's Intelligence and Investigation Office (SIIO).

He claimed that Torres prepared a sanitized statement, falsely saying that Soriano saw a gang rape committed in his van.

The driver further alleged that he was barred to sign the statement because Torres purportedly threatened to include him in the rape charge.

Despite his sporty statement, Ursua tagged Soriano to prove 23-year-old Nicole's allegations against Smith, Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis and Keith Silkwood and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier.

The lawyer said that although Soriano contested his earlier statement, he never denied that Nicole was raped.

"He did not recant the whole affidavit," Ursua told the lawyers in a phone interview.

"There were two important points in his testimony. One, he did not say gang rape. On executing his affidavit I, and two, he did not say that [Nicole] was unbuckled from the van like a pig, [after the alleged act]," she said.

"In fact, in his second affidavit, he did not say that there was no rape. He stands by the details in his first statement ... But we have to go by what the Supreme Court had said ... that consistency is not looked upon with favor," she added.

Ursua did not specify who would handle Soriano's direct examination and if he would be asked to explain his own affidavit on the incident.

The prosecution examined cashier witnesses who had executed sworn statements before investigators.

Asked how important Soriano's testimony would be for the prosecution, Ursua said: "Every evidence is important."

Earlier, witness Joseph Ebonghon named Soriano as among those who had seen Nicole being unloaded from the fitness van at Subic's Alava Pier, a short walk to the accused servicemen's ship, the USS Baree.

Ebonghon, an Olongapo City businessman, narrated to the court excerpts of a chat he had with Soriano at the Subic SIIO office on Nov. 2.

According to Ebonghon, Soriano said that on the night of the incident, Smith and Nicole were seated in the van's third row; three other Americans were seated in the second row, and Carpentier was seated in the passenger seat beside the driver.

Soriano told the businessman that he had heard Carpentier tell Smith "Go Smith Go" as the others shouted several times "F**k F**k!"

'Rape case has ruined my life and career'—Smith

A 21-YEAR-OLD US MARINE ACCUSED OF raping a Filipina woman at the Subic Bay Freeport last year said on Sunday that the case has ruined his life and career.

"I think it's horrible what I've been accused of," Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, of St. Louis, Missouri, said in response to questions submitted through his lawyer by The Associated Press.

"This case has taken a year off of my life that I can never get back and I just hope the facts will stop and the people will start to see the truth," Smith said in the answers faxed to the AP by his lawyer.

He refused to answer questions related to the case because court proceedings are still ongoing. The US Embassy, which has custody of the Marines, has restricted media contact with Smith and the other accused.

Smith, along with three other Marines accused in the case, refused to enter pleas to the rape charges, so the judge entered not guilty pleas on their behalf. If convicted, they face a maximum 40 years in jail.

"My career and my life in general has come to a screeching halt," he said.

Smith said his family and friends initially thought he was joking when he first told them he had been charged with rape.

"They are all praying for the day that I will show my denial of all of these allegations and that I will be coming home to see them," said Smith, the second of three sons of a nurse and a firefighter.

"We have always been a really close family and I can't wait to get back and see them once all this is cleared up."

Smith, during a chance interview in court had earlier said it would be too expensive for his parents to fly to the Philippines for the trial, and that they could not afford to have their jobs. But he said he calls home a lot to talk to family and friends.

A 21-year-old seaman has accused Smith of raping her in a moving van at the Subic Bay Freeport, a former US Naval base, on Nov. 1 while Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier, Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood and Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis allegedly cheered him on.

She testified she resisted, but was drunk and was weak to stop the assault.

Defense lawyers said the woman and Smith had consensual sex.

Smith said when he is not in court for the hearings, which can hold four days a week, he listens to music and swaps stories with his co-accused.

He and Silkwood also entered services held by visiting pastors, and "that helps us with a positive outlook on all of this," he said.

Smith said he joined the Marines in 2004, two days after his high school graduation, to get a jump start on life and to help pay for a college education.

He said he was stationed in Okinawa, Japan. The Marines had just finished counterterrorism maneuvers with Philippine troops when the alleged rape took place. AP

CALLING FOR JOBS Militants from Anakpawis on peach t-shirts calling for the impeachment of President Macapagal-Arroyo as the guests of the Bayanan where she will deliver her state of the nation address on July 24. RALPH LUMAN

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NDF seeks adoption of earlier agreement

By Dalln T. Mallari Jr.
Mid-Southern Luzon Bureau

AFTER REJECTING PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo's demand for a permanent ceasefire between government forces and New People's Army rebels as a precondition to the resumption of formal peace talks, the National Democratic front urged the government to study and finally adopt the proposed agreement that it submitted last year to finally end the 37-year-old communist insurgency.

"This proposal has never been withdrawn. So, it still stands," Luis Jalandoni, chair of the NDF peace negotiating panel, told the reporters in response to new small party.

Jalandoni predicted that war would stop and a just peace would ensue "within the very day" that the government and the NDF co-sign the proposed agreements.

He said he personally handed the draft of the NDF's "Comprehensive Agreement for an Immediate Just Peace" to lawyer Rene Sarmiento and other government officials in Oslo on Aug. 29, 2005.

Jalandoni, also a member of NDF national executive committee, said he also gave a copy of the proposed agreement to Norwegian government officials present.

Some of the highlights of the proposed agreement deal with the unity of the Filipino people against any foreign domination; empowerment of workers and peasants; economic sovereignty; reparations of foreign debts; and promotion of agrarian, scientific and progressive culture consistent of national traditions.

The rebels also called for an investigation of government officials who are liable for treason, corruption and human rights violations; the adoption of independent foreign policy with mutual trade and diplomatic relations with all countries; and finally, the cessation of armed hostilities.

Jalandoni maintained that the people's demands for land reform, education, health and other basic social services, and workers' right to just wages must be addressed in order to form a program.

"If there is no adequate response to the peasants' just demand for genuine land reform, there can be no peace. If the workers' demand for just wages and humane working conditions is not met there will be no peace," he stressed.

'Libingan ng mga Bayani' in Tacloban

By Jess A. Galvez
PhilStar Daily Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—THE YOUNGER BROTHER of former first lady Imelda Marcos will construct a "Libingan ng mga Bayani" in this city.

Tacloban City Mayor Alfredo "Fejo" Romualdez on Wednesday ordered the release of P6 million for the construction of the "Libingan ng mga Bayani," which will occupy three hectares of the 11.5-hectare Tacloban Sea Public Cemetery in Barangay Diit, located about 10 kilometers from the city proper.

Romualdez, constructing a hero's burial ground was his way of recognizing the good deeds, if not "heroic acts" of the residents of this city.

Construction would immediately commence and the project is expected to be finished within the year, the mayor said.

Romualdez said he created a special committee, which he chairs, that would formulate the guidelines as to who would qualify to be buried in the "Libingan ng mga Bayani."

The special committee will include representatives from the city government's organizations and from the Church, if the mayor asks.

This only, however, the city mayor said that among those who would qualify to be buried at the cemetery are those who occupy elective positions in the city government—mayors, vice-mayors and members of the city council.

"They deserve no less since their home and occupations as they have spent the best years of their lives [doing good deeds] especially for the city and even for the entire region," the city mayor told the business, referring to those who would be interred on the city's own section of the "Libingan ng mga Bayani" in Fort Bonifacio, Makati City.

LGUs urged to set aside budget vs Reds

By Norman Bordadora

INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT Secretary Ronaldo Puno yesterday urged local officials to set aside a portion of their peace and order budget for the Arroyo administration's two-year final push against the Communist rebels.

Puno told local officials that he would ask Malacañang to come up with counterpart funds from the national coffers to help local government units give "logistical and operational" support to the PNP in its "active support role" versus the armed leftist rebels.

"The victory over insurgency is a continuing and sustained struggle. The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the PNP must go all out against the hardcore sixteen-man insurgency engenders. Our local government units and communities down to the barangay level are part of the core of this effort," Puno said in a statement.

His pronouncement was in line with a Malacañang directive requiring local chief executives to incorporate a counter-insurgency component in their integrated public safety plans for provinces, cities and municipalities.

The call for local government funds in the anti-NPA campaign comes in the wake of the PNP's P300-million share in the P1-billion anti-insurgency budget set aside by the Arroyo administration for the all-out war against the leftist underground.

"All of us should be involved in defending and protecting the nation against this continuing threat, so that our countrymen in insurgency-affected barangays can rest better at night, be free from revolutionary taxation, and live in communities that are conducive to economic growth," the secretary said.

Puno, concurrent chair of the National Police Commission, told the Inquirer on Saturday that part of the PNP's active support role against the NPA was the recruitment of "police auxiliaries" from among the ranks of barangay officials, particularly the tanods or community patrol persons.

"If they are going to defend the community, they will necessarily have to be armed," he said.

The secretary said the police auxiliaries among barangay tanods would be "force multipliers" of the PNP especially in far-flung barangays in the countryside. He said they would defend the community from revolutionary taxation and would prevent armed cadres from conducting organizing activities among civilians.

NPA rebels kill 3

CITY OF GILAWA—A policeman and a government soldier were killed yesterday while two others were wounded in a three-hour gunfight with 30 suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels in the mountainous ribs of Pungki in Barangay Sidon, about [illegible] in Bug-town, province.

The slain officers were given [illegible] escort yesterday by [illegible] when [illegible] in Barangay Sidon, Calangit, Bulacan, police said.

SPO2 Danilo Soriano of the Philippine National Police office in Occidental Mindoro identified those killed as PO1 Michael Tabada and PO1 Reny Sombrunong. One of the wounded was Edderson Bocago.

The third victim, Pfcc Lt. Paul Pantong 34, was from Malate, Manila and assigned to the 304th Infantry Battalion, in Mangatarem, Pangasinan, some 190 km west of Calasiqui.

Poe [illegible] pointed down fortuny yesterday at 9:25 a.m. while he was [illegible] the fire truck on [illegible], which was parked in front of his girlfriend's house.

Fortuny died in [illegible]. Abdulmari T. Hirala and Alarbin Ramon, PFO Southern Luzon Bureau and Fourth Ocjac and Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk, with a report from Filemon Hooper Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Security enhanced at airport

THE MANILA INTERnational Airport Authority (MIAA) started implementing over the weekend the second phase of an enhanced security procedure at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 1.

In a statement, the MIAA said these security procedures were being implemented at the NAIA 1 departure level to speed-up boarding procedures and ensure a "less stressful stay at the airport" for departing passengers.

On Saturday, the MIAA relocated the x-ray machines from the satellite area to the [illegible] area adjacent to the immigration counters and confirmed it was true.

Departing passengers won't have to queue anymore at the satellite areas for the final check since they would undergo final security check right after the processing of their immigration requirements, the MIAA said. Nikko Dizon

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OFWs' escape routes in Lebanon bombed

From page A1

workers in Lebanon, most of them employed as domestic workers.

"I'm certain our embassy will be able to find other areas where we could evacuate the other 10,000," Amapo said.

The evacuation would only be done by land.

Alert level raised

"We will emphasize that this is the Filipino convoy and we are a neutral party in the situation," Amapo said.

Amapo said the situation is a possible evacuation zone (the citizens of the Beirut international airport, highways and main roads, and the air and naval blockade imposed by the Israeli forces.

The embassy has raised to level 2 the alert for the Filipinos in Lebanon, which means they should be prepared for an evacuation.

"They should all be packed by now and be ready to go. We're preparing for the worst-case scenario, which is their evacuation. The embassy has a taxi brigade to evacuate our nationals (if there would be an evacuation," Amapo said.

He said the members, led by Ambassador Al Francis Bichara, had begun coordinating with United Nations agencies on the ground, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the governments of Israel and Lebanon to ensure the safety of the Filipino convoy in case an evacuation took place.

Special envoy Ray Cimatu, head of the Middle East Peacekeeper Team, has been dispatched by the government in Beirut to assess the situation and decide if an evacuation would be needed.

Cimatu was scheduled to leave last night, Amapo said.

"There's no uncertainty yet. He will be waiting for Ambassador Cimatu's recommendations," Amapo said.

Amapo said the sentiments of Filipino workers would most likely be supportive in light of the volatile security situation in Beirut.

Rockets on Haifa

"We have to face reality. The evacuees would be outpouring because the priority should be the safety of our workers," Amapo said.

Hezbollah militants have declared an open war against Israel following increased air strikes by the Israeli military.

In a dramatic escalation of the 5-day-old conflict, Lebanese guerrillas fired a relentless barrage of rockets into the northern Israeli city of Haifa on Sunday, killing eight people at a train station and wounding seven others.

Soon afterward, Israeli warplanes hit the south Beirut stronghold of Hezbollah with at least six air strikes, shaking the Lebanese capital and sending a cloud of thick smoke rising over the neighborhood.

The attack on Haifa raised Israel's death toll from the fighting to at least 23, 11 soldiers and 12 civilians. Israeli air strikes in Lebanon have killed 148 people, almost all of them civilians.

The attack came after Israel unleashed its fiercest bombardment yet of Beirut, reducing entire apartment buildings to rubble and knocking out electricity to many areas in the capital.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vowed that there would be "far-reaching consequences" for the rocket attack—the deadliest ever to hit Israel.

Syria, Iran blamed

Smoke was seen over Haifa and air raid sirens wailed as the dead and wounded were evacuated. Other rockets hit the city's major oil refinery, gas storage tanks and a major street during the busy morning rush hour.

Israeli authorities warned all residents to "take extra safety" following the attack and ordered the closure of schools, businesses and many factories.

Israel's Channel 10 said Syria and Iran for providing the weaponry that hit Haifa—making the spectre of a wider regional confrontation.

The Israeli Air Force dropped leaflets over south Lebanon telling residents to leave immediately before an imminent attack.

Escalation of fighting

"In two or three hours we are going to attack the south of Lebanon very heavily," said Maj. Gen. Udi Adam, the head of Israel's northern command.

It was the sharpest escalation since fighting began last Wednesday after Hezbollah guerrillas penetrated Israel to its east and, killing eight soldiers and capturing another two. The fighting opened a second front for Israel, which had already been fighting Hamas-linked militants in the Gaza Strip following the capture of another Israeli soldier on June 25.

Israeli troops, tanks and helicopter gunships resumed assaults on Gaza on Sunday, firing missiles and exchanging gunfire with armed Palestinians in a raid that killed three militants.

Masked militants in Gaza vowed in a news conference Sunday to launch more rockets at Israel "to show solidarity with the train of our resistance," referring to Hezbollah.

World leaders

In St. Petersburg, Russia, key world leaders struggled to draft a response to the raging crisis as US President George W. Bush defended Israel and blamed militants backed by Iran and Syria.

Leaders of the Group of Eight major industrialized nations pessimistic their original energy-focused agenda to group by consensus on the Middle East.

The United States praised for a tough statement identifying the root cause of the violence at the Lebanese-Shiite extremists backed, Islamist militias and Syria.

"It's a sovereign matter, Israel has every right to defend itself against terrorist activity," Bush said after meeting British Prime Minister Tony Blair. "Our message to Israel is defend yourself, but be mindful of the consequences. And as we've urged restraint."

But many G8 partners, notably Russian President Vladimir Putin and most European leaders, say the Israeli assaults are "disproportionate" and a waste of innocent life. With reports from AP, AFP

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, July 17, 2006
15th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Is 1:10-17
Gospel: Matthew 10:34-11:1

Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not think that I have come to establish peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and daughter against her mother; a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Each one will have as enemies those of one's own family.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. One who seeks to benefit from his life will lose it; one who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Whoever welcomes one welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me. The one who welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; the one who welcomes a just man because he is a just man will receive the reward of a just man. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is a disciple of mine, I assure you, he will not go unrewarded."

When Jesus had finished giving his twelve disciples these instructions, he went on from there to teach and to proclaim his message in their towns.

Commentary

Does the Word of God is compelled by the sacrifices, rites and prayers that we perform? Does God demand and bestow favors only to those who offer the blood of the innocents and the infants they inflict upon the poor? Which pleases Him, rebuke wrongs, and take care of the poor. It is the same always. And Jesus the prophet warns that he is here as a sign of contradiction, that his presence divides families, marriages and communities. We are so shocked by these words that we forget that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and God in Jesus. We are to carry the cross and welcome the stranger and the poor. Are we prophets and holy people or are we subtly usually trying to please all sorts of people in our life while claiming at the same time we claim that it is God who owns us?

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MONDAY,
JULY 17, 2006

A6

OFWs up slightly in first semester

THE NUMBER OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS deployed rose slightly in the first half of the year, the Department of Labor and Employment announced yesterday.

Citing a report from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 383,927 and 504,509 OFWs were deployed in the first half this year compared to 355,125 in the same period last year, or a 1.80 percent increase.

The number of deployed OFWs is more than half of the targeted one million workers deployed this year.

The deployed OFWs are composed of 428,317 documented land-based workers and 136,204 FILIPINO workers re-hired. Old host destinations worldwide between January 1 to June 29, 2006.

The DOLE attributed the increase to the rehiring of land-based OFWs and to the increased demand for skilled Filipino workers.

Labor undersecretary Danilo Cruz said that the number of inland land-based OFWs grew 0.8 percent to 266,820 as of June 29 from 273,646 in the same period in 2005. Lala R. Sahnawi

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Cebu, Bohol eyed as major tourist destinations

By Irene R. Jose Cruz
PhilStar Bureau

CEBU CITY—CEBU AND BOHOL will have the opportunity to showcase its tourist sites during a four-day tour organized for the participants of the second Ambassadors/Consuls General tour of the Philippines.

Belita Aurora Rex, regional director of the Department of Tourism in Central Visayas, said the program is part of the DOT's efforts to increase foreign tourist arrivals.

The ambassadors and consuls general to the United States and Canada as well as the tourism attachés assigned in those countries will head the over 100 tour participants, most of whom are Filipino-Americans, Rex said.

The group arrived in Manila on July 15 and will leave for out-of-town tours tomorrow.

While Tourism Secretary Joseph "Joe" Durano has focused on the short-haul tourism market last year, Rex said the DOT is also looking at the other markets, such as North America.

South Korea has become the top tourism market of General Visayas but North American market remains the country's top source of tourists, she said.

She noted that there is an untapped market of Filipino-Americans who are holding US passports and have yet to visit the country.

"Hopefully, by word of mouth, they can help promote the Philippines. By putting them in hotels, not with their relatives here, they will be in a position to see the tourism development here," Rex added.

The first part of the tour in Manila included meeting Presidential Assistant for Visayas Affairs Mitzi Cajayon-Uy and hosting lunch at Malacañang and touring its museum. They also participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Rizal Park. The tour package also included a city tour and, if time permits, Pagsanjan falls.

After four days in Manila, Rex said, the participants break into groups for the one-of-a-kind tours. Aside from the Cebu-Bohol package, the other destinations include the Laguna Lake Loop, Iloilo-Guimaras, Boracay, Davao, Palawan, Luzon/Vigan/Baguio, Cagayan de Oro/Camiguin and Zamboanga.

In Cebu, the tour participants will be going on a city tour, which includes a visit to Fort San Pedro, the Magellan's Cross and the Heritage of Cebu Monument in the morning and a guimo barong in the afternoon.

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Police accused of 'terrorizing' Bayan members

By Luige A. del Puerto

MILITANTS YESTERDAY ACCUSED THE police of "terrorizing" local chapters of the party-list group Bayan Muna in Quezon City and Manila ahead of President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address late this month.

Bayan Muna claimed that police were playing dirty tricks to scare taxicab drivers away from joining the militant group's efforts to report to Camp Crame, headquarters of the Philippine National Police.

"The modus operandi involves three officers approaching the barangay chairperson with a letter containing the names of Bayan Muna members and notifying them that they should go to Camp Crame," said Bukaneer Cadiz, the group's deputy secretary general.

Dr Caren said officers on the ground reported the incident in party headquarters last week.

He said the same took place shortly after the PNP based its security preparations for the State.

Metro Manila police chief Director Vidal Querol, however, denied that plainclothesmen were sent to catch out Bayan Muna leaders at the barangay level and to tell them to report to Camp Crame.

Querol said his only instructions to his staff were to "touch base" with militant leaders so they and the police could discuss their concerted protest rallies on July 24.

"My instruction was to touch base with militant leaders, not to ask them to report to Crame. If they agree, they could talk in one place over breakfast. That would be okay," Querol said.

"What is important to me is that they can hold a rally within the limits of BP 880," he said, referring to the law on public assembly.

"They need be accorded their rights (to express their opinions)," he added.

He reminded organizers anew to be vigilant following police reports that communist rebels would attempt to infiltrate the demonstrations and sow chaos.

The Metro Manila Police said it will deploy some 14,000 cops and soldiers at Congress and other places in the capital on July 24, making it one of the biggest security preparations this year.

The police has adopted an elaborate security plan for Bayan after unidentified armed bodyguards of Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo raided the Bataan compound during a raid on a safe house of the Maguindo group of rebel soldiers in Quezon City two (Tribune) ago.

Dr Caren described the police's alleged intimidation as "extreme tactic."

"It is a prior restraint on our right to peaceful assembly. It is also an extension of the illegal (policy of) militarized preemptive response—with the potential happening right where the protesters can't hear nor in the rally, their homes," he said.

"The same modus operandi is also being done in other communities where activist groups are present, most especially in the communities near the Sitio Mahikaw complex," Dr Caren said.

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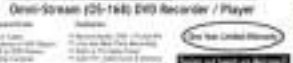

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Software documents rights violations

DAVAO CITY—Alarmed over the reported extra-judicial killings in the country, the Ann Foundation has tapped information technology (IT) to effectively monitor human rights in the country.

The project dubbed Mantra, would be piloted in Mindanao and implemented in partnership with the Commission on Human Rights, according to Dr. Sawsy Bool, Ann Foundation representative.

Bool said they have chosen Mindanao because it is considered a hotspot in rights violations.

The project uses a software program designed to systematize the manner of documenting, storing and reporting information on human rights abuses in the country, it has been in development since 2002.

It would be fully implemented this year, Bool said.

CHR chair Purificacion Quisumbing said the implementation of the project would enable them to enhance competence, credibility and accountability.

"The goal of the CHR is to know its worth and give justice to human rights violations victims and be awarded redress. I give accurate information," Quisumbing said.

She said the Mantra Project would replace the primitive manner, by which the CHR receives human rights violations in the country. Judy Quiros, Philstar.com Bureau

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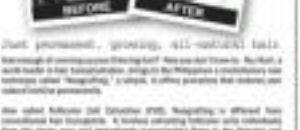

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Vestments among Palace gifts, says CBCP official

From page A1

to win CBCP sympathy—like bringing food during a meeting and providing manicure for prelates.

On May 31, an unexpected Palace guest showed up with trays of food at the permanent session of the CBCP in Manila, according to the source, who was present during the delivery.

Unknown to permanent council members who included Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the CBCP president, the cops had been waiting for them at lunchtime on the third floor secretary of the CBCP office in Intramuros.

The members of the CBCP's policymaking body refused the P24-K meal, considering it out to sidetrack sessions were then gathered for the launching of the Year of Social Concerns.

Fr. Jaime Pigtain, the acting CBCP secretary general, was so appalled by the unexpected gift that he immediately asked his staff to send the trays back to its donor, according to the source, who declined to be named because of the sensitive nature of his position.

"It was fuming mad," the CBCP official told the inquirer in an interview on Friday. "He felt it was to become gift. So he threw it was something political attached to it."

The donor was later identified at a remote Navy lobbyist, said to be a lawyer, who was also seen with Federa "Nora" Valdez, Malacañang's undersecretary for religious affairs, during the July 5-14 CBCP plenary assembly in Mandaluyong.

Still, Ad-Hoc was reportedly anything but discouraged by Pigtain's rejection.

40 vestments

During the plenary gathering, Ad-Hoc reportedly purchased around 40 vestments to be distributed to a select group of bishops. A set of vestments, including the stole and the chasuble, costs between P5,000 and P15,000.

The source said the vestments were initially bought from La Salute and the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master, two popular manufacturers of pastoral garments. But they are up and down the CBCP meeting in the Pope Pius XII Catholic Center in Manila.

While the gifts of food and vestments seemed innocent, the source said many members of the CBCP were wary of the political agenda that might have been attached to them.

"We're just wondering why we're getting all these gifts when there are no occasions and nobody asked for them," he said.

The CBCP Information and Church officials were cautious that Malacañang might have been trying to threaten them with gifts and favors in the hope that the strategy could derail their judgment on key issues.

At least three bishops earlier submitted to the Inquirer that they had been offered envelopes containing cash on separate occasions during the wedding CBCP retreat and plenary assembly.

Pastoral statement

The plenary produced a pastoral statement on July 10 declaring that the prelates were "not inclined at the present moment to favor the impeachment process as a means of establishing the truth" no matter the Ang-Ayan survey in the 2004 election—a charge she has repeatedly denied.

Signing Bishop Jose Mangaran said two envelopes, each containing P15,000 each, were slipped into his hands by a staff member of Ad-Hoc while the undersecretary was talking with him about recollections for government officials.

Another bishop from a poor diocese in Mindanao said he had a similar experience with Valdez and her staff and rejected the envelope right away.

The 40-year-old Mangaran, who had described the incident as an attempt to bribe the bishops, immediately asked Father Pigtain to return the envelopes to Malacañang. They included a letter explaining his reasons, a copy of which he still keeps to prove that his hands were clean.

Envelopes

"We were not influenced by (their envelopes) passed on to us," Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, the CBCP vice president, yesterday told the Church-run Radio Veritas.

The Cagayan de Oro prelate also told the Inquirer that he himself had been offered necessities during a meeting with Cabinet secretaries on July 3, the eve of the CBCP meeting.

He said the envelopes, similar to those given to bishops, were delivered to their rooms either during the Ad-Hoc meeting or in January but was captured a month later.

Leftist-rightist plot

On July 26, the troops declared a weeklong state of national state of emergency, citing a plot to oust her by leftist and rightist conspirators.

Magalong has denied that it was working with the communist to overthrow Arroyo.

The source said it was possible that it was the MILF that was conducting talks with the communist leaders because the MILF is a formidable member of the group, and based on the military and media reports following San Juan's arrest.

One of the sources said that

PNP starts probing coup financiers

From page A1

lee said there were no sacred cows and that the government would go after all those involved, including the financiers.

"The President ordered us to go after destabilizers. There was a general instruction that we should even after them. That's why she called on the police and military to work together," Gonzalez told the Senate.

"We'll go after all those people even if they are businessmen. What makes businessmen sacred cows? If you are a businessman involved in destabilization, you should know the repercussions," he said.

The Senate panel is investigating the destabilization efforts could be charged with either sedition or coup d'etat, depending on their participation, he added.

But evidence needed

Gonzalez earlier said the government had identified at least 20 prominent businessmen and other people who gave "direct" aid to the plotters. He said some of these people bankrolled the failed July 24 coup plot while the others had been helping in the destabilization efforts since last year.

The Justice secretary would not say if Mrs Arroyo, who has left on a visit to Libya, has been told of the identities of these people. He would not answer, either, when asked if the government has enough evidence to go to court to file charges against the so-called financiers of the plot, saying that would depend on the President's policy.

Gonzalez also stressed that even though the government had information about the identities of the financiers, the matter would have to be carefully decided to ensure there was evidence against them.

"Even if we know who the names of the people, we don't know if there is sprecific evidence against them. So how to see to it that information is properly evaluated, but it is enough to let the whole world know what we are doing," he said.

Who is the mastermind?

The Justice secretary said assuming that the government knew

Chavez sees RP-US plot in Bolante case

A1 story, page A2

the US Embassy to cancel Bolante's visa and coldly asked for help in locating Bolante and arresting its numerous ex-bits.

"We are still trying (also) for a role here. This seems to be a tactical ploy of Malacañang. Malakaibang ang pamilit dito (Malacañang is behind this)," Chavez said.

Magsaysay's request was made a long three days and there was no action on it. The Senate was also only asking for assistance in locating Bolante and serving as summons in the hope of bringing him back. They did not ask for a cancellation of his visa," he added.

Palace intervened!

Chavez said Malacañang must have intervened when it heard about Magsaysay's request and asked the US government to cancel Bolante's visa.

"From all indications, Malacañang intervened and worked very hard on this. Why? Because Bolante was complaining that he has been under a lot of pressure trying to get in and out of the country without people noticing him," Chavez said.

"This would also be an effective means of thwarting any kind of local process in the Philippines to hold him accountable. So his visa was cancelled and he applied for asylum. That was why he was not deported," he added.

Chavez also noted that the BIA had kept mum for six days about Bolante's arrest in Los Angeles on July 7.

"Why the silence? It's like saying, 'Mission accomplished. Let him stay there,'" he said.

Credible fear hearing

Chavez said he had heard reports from the BIA that a "credible fear hearing" had already started in the United States for Bolante's asylum application.

"That only comes in cases after an application for asylum has been filed," he said.

He said that in a credible fear hearing, Bolante would have to present proof that he is in danger of persecution in the Philippines for reasons of his race, religion and political beliefs and convictions.

"He can stay in the US so long as his deportation or asylum application process is pending and that could last for a long time if he gets a good American lawyer. It could be delisted from there in five years," Chavez said.

Once the process starts, the Senate or the Philippine government will not be able to do anything to bring him back to the country until it is completed, he said. "The botom line can be said, but that is the reality."

Rescue ally in distress

In Congress, two representatives said Malacañang should mount a rescue effort for Bolante, calling him an ally in distress.

Rep. Mohsin Jikiri of Zamboanga del Sur, vice chair of the House committee on good government, said that like any ordinary Filipino citizen, Bolante was entitled to assistance from the Philippine government.

"If our government was able to extend help to Filipinos arrested abroad who have pending cases here, what more of those who have no cases like Bolante?" he said.

Jikiri called on the politicians and the public to hold off judgment on the man in the center of the fertilizer scam pending the determination of the cause of the cancellation of his US visa.

The lawmaker noted that no criminal case has been filed against Bolante.

Rep. Edwin Ilyo of Isabela, vice chair of the House committee on agriculture and food, said Bolante was not a fugitive from justice although he had resigned repeatedly a Senate inquiry into the fund mess.

No case yet

"If a case had been previously lodged against him in court, I believe he would have fled this. And even if a case is filed against him now, I feel he will face this to clear his name," said the lawmaker.

Ilyo said speculations about his canceled visa and the fertilizer fund scam were meant to muddle the investigation one in the United States.

"Let us not jump to conclusions. Our officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs have already assured there is no intention to keep his arrest under wraps," he said.

Ilyo, however, urged the Ombudsman to finish its own inquiry into the scam pending the resolution of the visa cancellation issue.

"If it finds that Bolante has any liability, charges should be filed before the proper forum which is the court," he said. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac

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Militant students oppose Lapus appointment

By Alexis Romero

MILITANT STUDENTS BROKE TUESDAY joined the mounting clamor against the appointment of Taclac Rep. Jesli Lapus as the new secretary of the Department of Education.

The Kalayaan Party said the appointment of Lapus showed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's "bare regard for educational sector," adding that the legislator's appointment was a clear insult to the aspirations of the country's youth for equally qualified capable officials.

"While Rep. Lapus does has the credentials to qualify as a Deputy Head, the fact remains that there are other career officials within the department that are equally qualified and have long years of vital experience of running the agency," Kabataan Party president Raymond Palatino said.

He added that the appointment of Lapus was "payoff" for his sponsorship of the votes which cost INEC law.

Yet his part, Kabataan Party-list pres-

ident Carl Marc Hermoso urged Deputy Officers in Charge Dr. Villafuerte to "stand up and speak out to Deputy."

"We must resist this kind of investment from the Palace. All of these only show the administration's low regard for the department and the education sector as a whole," said Hermoso.

Marco Delos Reyes, president of the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) said education continues to suffer because of "erotic politics."

"The unfortunate matter is education, but the most unfortunate are the schoolchildren," Delos Reyes said.

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TUCP backs pay hike for state workers

Gov. Mercado's 2007 budget should provide for a P3,000 salary increase for some 1.175 million civil servants, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines said yesterday.

TUCP general-secretary Antonio Montoya said that Malacañang and Congress are expected to provide a living wage for its workers, and an increase to date monthly salaries should be forthcoming.

"We are definitely counting on government's proposed spending program for next year to include an increase ... (so) ... workers whatever buying power public sector workers have lost to consistent price increases," Montoya said. Lalu & Asiaworks

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Papal envoy raises alarm over killings of activists

THE PAPAL ENVOY TO THE Philippines yesterday expressed alarm at the growing number of murders of journalists and activists, saying the country's reputation was suffering.

"I am surprised to see that in the Philippines, there is still an activity of high incidences of a moral and political violence against those who confess different political ideologies," Papal Nuncio to Archbishop Fernando Filoni said.

Filoni cited a forum last week when the Church was heartened by President Macapagal-Arroyo's recent abolition of the death penalty, the previous month, but at the same time damaged by the rash of murders.

"It will truly be a contradiction, if on the one hand, we practically abolished the death penalty and yet on the other hand we are not remarking or strengthening the rights of the human race," he added.

Mr. Arroyo was praise from Pope Benedict XVI in a personal meeting at the Vatican last month when she presented him with the documents on the abolition of the death penalty—a longtime priority of the Church in the country.

Filoni did not say who might be behind the murders, which leftist groups have widely blamed on the Arroyo administration.

Leftist groups have said this year by one hundred of their members have been murdered since Ms. Arroyo came to power in 2001.

The journalists have been murdered this year compared to seven in last year, leading the Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders) to say in a 2006 report that "after Iraq, the Philippines is the most dangerous country for journalists." AFP

CBCP letter masterpiece of ecclesiastical hedging

From page A1

who made it can draw any interpretation that suits his/her fancy or prejudices.

At such, it is not an illuminating document and it is not helpful in making moral judgments on the impeachment issue. The key is left in its vest to read the minds of their bishops. In this circumstance, determination of the truth lies in the eyes of the beholders.

The bishops, who are too quick to meddle in politics, have been cruel in their document in their flock by avoiding categorical pronouncements in the impeachment issue.

Key phrase

The key phrase in the six-page "Pastoral Letter on Social Concerns" of the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines," comprising no less than 40 paragraphs, is contained in Paragraph 34, headed "Impeachment."

The paragraph reads: "In the light of previous circumstances, we are not inclined at the present moment to favor the impeachment process as the easiest way to solidifying the truth.

"For unless the persons and rules as well as the rules-sets of all participating parties, pro and con, are guided by no other motive than genuine concern for the common good, impeachment will seem again more as an unproductive political exercise, damaging every citizen, and deepening the citizen's negative perception of politicians."

The letter touched on other major issues—electoral reforms, Charter change and unexplained remittances. But the heart of the document and its most compelling issue is impeachment.

The administration seized the phrase that—impeachment "will once again prove as an unproductive political exercise, deepening the citizens' negative perception of politicians"—as a signal to members of Congress not to pursue the futile exercise in the months ahead.

The phrase provided relief to the Arroyo administration in the face of another impeachment siege and left it with the belief that the bishops are on its side on the contentious questions of not giving due course to the new impeachment complaints.

Momentum dampened

It is uncertain whether the complaint would secure the required 78 votes in the House to enable the lower chamber to endorse the case to the Senate for trial. This is the practical consequence of the pastoral letter. The letter could dampen a momentum building up behind the complaints.

It may be said that the pastoral letter is a severe interpretation of the political reality and, in that sense, it reflects the bishops' recognition of the political pragmatism involved in the impeachment process.

Clearly, the failure of two impeachment actions during the past five years has not been lost on the bishops.

▲ In the impeachment trial of Senate President Joseph Estrada in 2000, the process was frustrated by the suppression of the evidence on his banking transactions.

▲ Last year, the process was aborted when the House voted to kill the impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo through the overwhelming number of the pro-administration majority.

In effect, the bishops are recognizing the public against unrealistic expectations and bracing them for further disappointments, given the same balance of forces in Congress in the past.

No less cynical

The pastoral letter suggests that the bishops are no less cynical than secular observers about the remote possibility that Ms Arroyo would set aside any of the impeachment complaints in the mean rails of the legislature process.

There are dissenting voices among the CBCP members, including Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez who has filed one of the impeachment complaints.

In order not to be accused of standing to members, the CBCP covered. In flanks, saying that "we respect the position of individuals or groups that wish to continue using the impeachment process as the means for establishing the truth."

The pastoral letter points out that unless people participating in the impeachment process are guided "by no other motive than genuine concern for the common good," impeachment would become "unproductive political exercise."

It is hard to determine who among the participants is purely motivated by "genuine concern for the common good." All the participants claim they had legal grounds for action for the common good.

Laissez-faire policy

The effect of this laissez-faire policy is that the bishops have given up on impeachment as the legal process in being elusive to the electoral rigging issue as well as on the removal of Ms Arroyo from office before the end of her term.

The pastoral letter has left open the resolution of the crisis of the President's legitimacy by other means, allowing the intervention of other forces outside the constitutional framework.

It has not helped the long-term stability of the Arroyo administration. It did want to give the President a chance to win gain.

Lesson from killer quake: Don't take life for granted

From page A1

"He never ran a break and I was on my way to get tea when the building trembled and the lights instantly turned out," Bravo, 62, recalls.

"I immediately hid under the table. It was totally dark and I was lying on my back, trying to survey my surroundings with my hands," she says.

Is this the end?

"My head was resting on the feet of a man. His feet were shaking for a while and then stopped. He died at that instant."

The first thought that ran in her mind was it was the end, she says. "I screamed my life, prayed for my family and I believed God for everything. I was ready to die."

Other people were calling on God and screaming for help, Bravo says. "Panginoon! (God!), diyo ano naman!"

With her in the room was her sister-in-law, Ingenuous "Penang" Bravo, wife of the senator's brother Ubo, who was also among the participants. "When I asked her if she was all right, she said she got pinned down," Sonia says.

Another man had a flashlight and a watch, and we asked him the time once in a while because he thought we were losing consciousness.

While she was relatively comfortable with her position, Sonia knew that the table had already caved in.

"It was a time when all I learned in Catholic school got encapsulated," Sonia says.

"The image of Jesus shinning in the storm was vivid to me. The apostles were asking for His help and I was doing just that," she says. "I was praying the whole time."

Rescue mission

Her prayer was answered at around 6 p.m. the next day, when she heard helicopters hovering the debris.

"She made noises. I was knocking my two hard on the cable for the rescuers to hear," she says. Soon, she heard somebody asking, "Mine-sino kayo? (Who are you?)" And they screamed to the top of their lungs for help.

The rescuers were cadets from Charlie Company of the Philippine Military Academy.

"They were using jackhammers. But many were screaming for them to stop because they got pinned down all the more. In my case, the table could have given in to the rubble and the ceiling would have landed on my chest," Sonia says.

Then silence enveloped them.

"We thought we were already abandoned," Sonia recalls. "I was thirsty and hungry. My eyes were drying and I was trembling."

Digging from under

But it was just the time when miners from Benguet arrived to help in the rescue. They resorted to a mining strategy by digging from under to reach the victims.

"It around 11 p.m., they were forcing a hole near me," Sonia says. It was all gone a month. "They could have heard a hole in my body. I thanked God it was just the right spot," she says.

It was around 3 a.m. of July 28 when she finally got out—almost 36 hours after the earthquake struck and she was trapped in the rubble.

"I did not fit in the first hole," she recalls. "There was a glimmer of light from the rescuers. They also gave us water to sip slowly, but then they asked me to drop myself head first."

Of the 613 people who attended the IGAD conference, 34 were inside the building, but only around 14 were able to make it alive. Another estimates, the exact-in-law was not among them.

No wounds, injuries

"The last time I heard her, she told me she was having a hard time breathing. I begged whatever it was near her to let her. And then she fell silent. I thought she just fell asleep," Sonia says.

The moment Sonia got out of the rubble, she was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance.

"But I came out unscathed," she says. There were no wounds, no injuries, only a bleak and blue spot on her leg that appeared from tripping/her bra on the table.

"My husband and I proceeded to Manila on a chopper. He was sleeping the whole trip because he was more tired," she haughtily reminders.

"I was the one who was awake, looking down, sensing the extent of the damages. I did not think it was so bad."

When she saw the buildings that crumbled, "I thanked God for a near life. I was literally born again, coming out of the womb of the earth."

The earthquake also damaged 80,000 homes and displaced 750,134 people. It left a 125-km rupture in the ground that stretches from Dingalan, Aurora to Kasiguran, Bueras Visayas, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

New life

Celebrating a new life for Sonia means a lot of things. For one, it was pursuing environmental projects.

"I made it a personal pledge to get involved in environmental issues," she says. Among the major projects was the Earthspa Awards, a body that gives recognition to schools pushing for sustainable development in their areas and enhancing the environment. The awards were sponsored by the Senate-Spouses Foundation Inc.

The experience has also strengthened for in her work at the St. Michael's Hospice, where she helps out in preparing poor cancer patients to face death, and their families to cope with the imminent loss of their loved ones.

"It is not easy, it takes a truthful/plenary approach in do that," she reveals. "Real my experience counts."

She also admits to having a deeper spiritual relationship with God. In fact, she was part of the recent St. Ezekiel Moreno's pilgrimage in Nueva Ecija, where apostle-healed by the Augustinian Recollects.

"He went to 31 cities where we had healing Masses, visited priests and bishops and talked to people about God," she says.

Husband's death

Her fresh with death also made it easy for her to accept the death of her husband, then presidential candidate Raul Bravo. "I was even his 'caregiver' or 'head giver' as I say," she says.

Now, Sonia says she is busy preparing for the first death anniversary of her husband on Aug. 7. "I am arranging the memorabilia for the library of Naga, even named after my husband. The day of his death will also officially be Raul Bravo Day in Naga."

On the 15th anniversary of the killer earthquake, Sonia says she would take time out to reflect on her brush with death.

"Since then, I have been celebrating two birthdays: my biological birthday and the day I was saved. As I'm coming 16," she says, laughingly.

Asked about the greatest lesson she has learned from the terrible, she did not relate to survival. "We have been saved. We don't take it for granted. One should appreciate life as a gift from God, and you don't have to wait for an earthquake to realize that."

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Pimentel seeks shorter jail terms for student-convicts

By Philip C. Tubeza

SENATE MINORITY LEADER AQUILINO Pimentel Jr. has filed a bill allowing prisoners to have their jail sentence shortened if they enroll in schools while in prison.

Pimentel said he filed Senate Bill 2022 to encourage convicted offenders to take advantage of educational opportunities, help enhance their sense of self-respect and dignity, and decongest the country's overcrowded prisons.

"The proposed unequivocally recognizes as 'good conduct' the demonstrated courage, willingness and ability of a prisoner to increase his knowledge, develop life skills and strengthen his moral values while under detention," Pimentel said in a statement.

Under the bill, any prisoner who will take up a post-graduate, college, vocational skills or value development course, high school or elementary school within the prison system would be "granted good conduct time credit towards the service of his sentence."

The time credit shall not exceed 15 days for every month of study time, Pimentel said.

He said the bill also provides that prisoners who volunteer to teach in the special academic and vocational classes for fellow inmates will receive good conduct time credit equivalent up to 15 days for every month of teaching duties.

"Increasing the literacy and skills standards and strengthening the moral values of prisoners will facilitate their reintegration into the mainstream of society as reformed and productive citizens," Pimentel said.

Vehicle-increasing literacy among prisoners, a jail management system responsive to current needs and problems can be implemented to forestall jailbreaks, riots and other destabilizing activities, he added.

Moreover, Pimentel said this will enable the state to "fulfill its duty to provide edumentary and high school education to its citizens for free."

"It is a fact that many prisoners are unschooled or illiterates which may be contributory to their transgressions of the law," he said.

"Ignorance can't be more than education, and so, better proof of this could be found than in jails where ...

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vol. 21 No. 219

'Enterprise in crisis'

EDITORIAL

WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF TEACHERS in the national public school system, the Department of Education is the largest bureaucracy in the country. That is both its strength and its weakness.

The weakness becomes particularly apparent whenever politics rears its less-than-beautiful head in education matters: when overworked, underpaid teachers are forced to carry the burden of the election process every three years, or when a politician is appointed secretary of education.

The appointment of Tarlac Rep. Jesli Lapus as the new DepEd chief thus comes with the usual questions about political wheeling and dealing. The same suspicions welcomed President Macapagal-Arroyo's appointment of Sen. Raul Roco in 2003, and Rep. Florencio Abad in 2004.

It is a good thing that Lapus, a businessman turned three-term congressman, is unelected as the new education secretary. When members of a union of DepEd employees staged street protests against his appointment, Lapus naively asked them in a meeting, "I understand that all secretaries have experienced this kind of attitude," he said, before saying he wanted to sit down with the protesters.

But there is an encouraging flip-obvious. With elections less than a year away, Lapus' first hurdle is decidedly political: the perception that his job is merely to warm the secretary's seat, until next year's election. To be sure, he has addressed himself directly to that concern: "I wouldn't have accepted the post if it was only for a year. What can you do in a year?" (Would that other candidates or nominees for crucial public offices, such as the top posts in both the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police, enjoy the same consideration.)

His second hurdle is philosophical: How does he define the work that confronts him in education?

Because of his particular business experience, the secretary-designate sees himself as a manager; more precisely, as a crisis manager. There is something to be said for that, because the education sector in the Philippines is in fact in crisis.

"The first step in leading an enterprise out of a crisis is to address the human component," Lapus told the Inquirer last week, "relieving it of excess baggage, myths and misconceptions, breaking molds and then rewarding for productivity and efficiency."

We can forgive the management jargon, if Lapus (as businessmen also like to say) knows how to walk the talk. If we understand him correctly, what he is saying is that his first step would be to transform the department's culture from one that is still largely government-bound to one that embraces the highest standards and best practices of the private sector.

And he aims to start at the top. "Developing the managerial skills and capabilities of those who are in charge of the schools is an important factor in achieving better quality education as they are the ones on the ground. What we want to see is a quality standard persons in all the schools."

He also has teacher capability-upgrading in mind. "The quality of classroom education is determined by teacher quality. Block of this has to do with matching and getting the right educators with the right majors."

These two overriding objectives—turning school administrators into managers, empowering teachers—are basic stuff, the real ABCs of education, but in the country's political context, they are hardly underbrushed statements. We can already anticipate protests (perhaps by department employees, certainly by militant students) against the very use of private-sector templates as organizational models.

What gives us cautious reason to hope, however, is Lapus' third objective: To generate more funds for the education sector.

The "aim by 2007," Lapus said, "is for the DepEd to get what it is due" from the General Appropriations Act. This means an annual increase in the budget much greater than the P2 billion the department will receive this year—perhaps to as much as P32 billion next year. We expect Lapus to apply the lessons he learned as chief executive of the Land Bank once, and on outgoing chair of the Bataan export and manufacturing area, to the department's budget fight.

That would really be learning from experience.

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Reyes puts Bulacan governor in her place

THE LATEST BATTLE OF WAK-WAKAN IS over Governor Rosmari Carmen Bautista. Reyes ended it by stopping all marble quarry operations at the site of the national park in the municipalities of Doña Remedios Trinidad and San Miguel in Bulacan.

There is some sort of a "gold rush" for marble in those areas, though they are not mining for gold but for the rare...and therefore very expensive...sea rose marble. It is the cause of Bulacan's woes that instead of being made up of ordinary rock, the entire hill is made up of this unique marble that is worth in demand in the international market.

Only one operator has a legal quarry license and a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) with the government, but those were canceled by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in 1996. The court case involving this cancellation is still pending with the Supreme Court.

There are many small-scale miners operating at this site, however, and they are panicking after the unexpected announcement of the new Bulacan governor. Bautista Mining and Development Corp. (BMDC), it seems Bulacan Gov. Jose de Leon has made her office another BIDS by issuing small-scale quarry permits to her friends.

The Reyes ban itself is the result of suspension of quarry operations at Wak na Bato has an ironic, even humorous, twist.

Presuming herself as an environmentalist, the governor waged a high-profile campaign against Bautista's quarry operations at the quarrying site now visible at Wak na Bato as destruction to the environment. Her purpose now to have Bautista's quarry rights to Wak na Bato canceled by the DENR so that her own allies could take over. In doing so, however, she locked horns with the DENR's Reyes, whom she tried to persuade into canceling Bautista's quarrying rights. She even created the installation of a gate allegedly on the grounds of the Bulacan provincial capitol, recording the number of days that Reyes had let her down. But Reyes is the quarrying czar in this area in Bulacan. He let more than she could chew.

Last July 12, Reyes did make a deal, sans...and he shocked he in Cruz. Reyes did suspend the quarrying operations of Bautista, as she had urged, but also stopped all quarrying by her friends. Reyes cancelled all the small-scale mining permits the office of De la Cruz had issued to quarry operators. They essentially resumption of mining by reserved solely for the DENR, Reyes said in his decision.

De la Cruz's dominoes have been trying to put a positive spin to the DENR decision. "Reyes finished," they said, due to the pressure she has been receiving. Reyesnik Reyes' ruling put De la Cruz in her place.

Now she is not only facing plunder charges filed by Bautistaand but also the prospect of losing control, together with other Bulacan provincial officials, with completion of midterm to be serving person only the DENR is authorized by law to issue.

Bautistaand's business was suspended for deficiencies in the payment of excise taxes, corporation fees and royalties; likewise, for failure to put up measures to prevent air and water pollution; and for failure to present an Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program. If Bautista can fix the deficiencies, Reyes says would remain suspended until it shall have complied with all the proper housekeeping rules promulgated by the department.

Reyes also ordered the National Anti-Illegal Mining Center Task Force (NAMCTF), led by Undersecretary Roy Sandoval, to coordinate with the Philippine National Police to ensure full implementation of the DENR's order.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) was instructed to immediately make a comprehensive inventory of all quarrying sites in the area to determine the impact of the quarry operations on the surrounding water bodies.

May I suggest that the Department of Tourism be also called in to develop and promote this historic site that is a veritable spot. Use of all quarry permits at the site permanently and restore the original boundaries of the Bulacan State National Park, as proclaimed by President Manuel L. Quezon in 1937. Where it is now, the sea rose marble is more valuable than the sea rose flower that can be found in nothing is. You cannot eat quarries or patronize.

* * *

If Malacañang factotums could learn to try to imbue Gabbage Labor have talents a wow of the world, imagine what they could do and have been doing to people who are more materialistic and are more susceptible to earthly temptations. An amount of devoted by Malacañang's manipulators could make the people believe that there was no such thing as corruption. What? Are they saying that the bishops are liars?

In truth, the policy of this administration is: Every man has his price. How is base Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her minions have been able to hide their dirty deeds behind impenetrable, cling to power and unappreciation and power—by bribery. Because they have been largely successful in this enterprise, they must have the courage to try it on the moral leaders in the country. Bishops usually bring to battle body men whose only desire is to fight evil and follow the teachings of Christ. What will they try next?

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: A married couple in their 60s are visited by a fairy who, as a reward for their long marriage, granted them both a wish each.

"I want to travel around the world with my darling husband," says the wife. "For the first time in our married history cruise appear in her hand.

"I'm sorry, honey," says the husband, "but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me."

The fairy waved her wand, and the man became 90 years old.

Moral of the story: Men who are ungrateful bastards should remember that fairies are female.

More bishoprics

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THAT WAS A MIND-BOGGLING STATEMENT Archbishop Oscar Cruz of Lingayen-Dagupan. It shows ended it by stopping all marble quarry operations at the site of the national park in the municipalities of Doña Remedios Trinidad and San Miguel in Bulacan.

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* * *

If Malacañang factotums could learn to try to imbue Gabbage Labor have talents a wow of the world, imagine what they could do and have been doing to people who are more materialistic and are more susceptible to earthly temptations. An amount of devoted by Malacañang's manipulators could make the people believe that there was no such thing as corruption. What? Are they saying that the bishops are liars?

In truth, the policy of this administration is: Every man has his price. How is base Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her minions have been able to hide their dirty deeds behind impenetrable, cling to power and unappreciation and power—by bribery. Because they have been largely successful in this enterprise, they must have the courage to try it on the moral leaders in the country. Bishops usually bring to battle body men whose only desire is to fight evil and follow the teachings of Christ. What will they try next?

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: A married couple in their 60s are visited by a fairy who, as a reward for their long marriage, granted them both a wish each.

"I want to travel around the world with my darling husband," says the wife. "For the first time in our married history cruise appear in her hand.

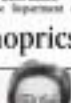
"I'm sorry, honey," says the husband, "but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me."

The fairy waved her wand, and the man became 90 years old.

Moral of the story: Men who are ungrateful bastards should remember that fairies are female.

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz



THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

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The North Korean missiles

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO, IN 2002, THE BUSH administration accused North Korea of secretly developing a program to enrich uranium to weapons grade. It claimed that there was no evidence of the 1994 agreement, which Pyongyang had signed with Washington, to freeze the country's pursuit of nuclear weapons. As a consequence, the dual-containment doctrine dictated that the United States was no longer bound by the terms of the agreement. Thus, the United States and no other responded the oil shipments they had been providing North Korea under that agreement.

In retaliation, Pyongyang expelled the International inspectors and resumed the reprocessing of plutonium.

It was never clear, however, that North Korea was engaged in weapons-grade uranium enrichment and not merely doing lower level enrichment for peaceful purposes. The assessment of

RP's No. 1 promoter of war

IN THE NAME OF THE RECENT fighting between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and government troops, 4,000 families or 20,000 individuals have been forcibly displaced from their homes. They are now languishing in insanitary and cramped makeshift evacuation centers.

Other again, life is gripped with fear and anger in Maguindanao, the center of the current hostilities between the government and the MILF. School operations have been halted. Economic activities are on hold. And the people are hungry, angry and anxious: in short for end to the unjust war that destroys our homes, families and lives! The peoples' woes cannot be summed up in words. But the massive scale of destruction the man-fed or militarily-misordained wars have caused in recent years cannot be denied or hidden.

An average Mindanaon family living in the provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and other Mindanao provinces, such as Lanao del Norte, General Santos, North Cotabato, South Cotabato and Sarangani, would have been displaced five to six times in a span of five years.

Also, during the three most devastating wars under Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's regime, around 600,000 people have been forcibly displaced—nearly 300,000 in the 2000 wave in Sulu, 300,000 in the 2003 wave in Northern and Central Mindanao and around 80,000 in the 2006 wave of hostilities in Sarangani. (The figures are based on the Department of Social Welfare and Development's records).

The recent surge of violence puts the people no reason to believe the Arroyo administration's statements that the GRP-MILF peace talks are indeed "moving on." The derailment of the peace negotiations, even in the past, was always caused by a breach of ceasefires. With this backdrop, crucial questions arise: Is the current war in Maguindanao a deliberate attempt to disrupt the GRP-MILF peace talks? Who did the government not give a "suspension of fire" to the MILF's subversive denial of responsibility in the June bombing, instead, the government responded with military might?

The hostilities can dash to the Arroyo administration's austerity to pursue peace in Mindanao. The vicious cycle of war that the Arroyo administration engages in frustrates the Moro people's aspiration for a life that is free from the shackles of state perpetrated violence, for a kind of peace that is based on justice and democracy.

It appears now that this draws still find no realization in the Arroyo regime. The Filipino people will be better off without this Arroyo's neo-Marcos, we must gather our strength and unite against the No. 1 promoter of unjust wars in Mindanao and in the whole country.

—HERMAN ALLAN BRIONES SARMIENTO,
vice chair, Bisaya-Mindanao Peoples' Alliance (BAYAN)
Barangay Pinyahan,
Diliman, Quezon City

Mix of greedy 'trapos' and irresponsible media

THE POLITICAL TURMOIL HAGGING our country today does not only worsen the state of our ailing economy; it also puts in the limelight the "miserable," selfish and political-politician (trapo) and irresponsible media.

Consumed by their greed for wealth and power, as well as with their obsession with media exposure, the trapos indulge in negative politics, using all the dirty tricks they can muster to pursue their selfish ends. In so doing, they expose their vicious characters.

On the other hand, the media—print, television and radio—"feast" on these politicians' personalities. It can't be denied that media prefer news stories that are negative more than the positive ones as the former attract a larger clientele. Of course, in justify this, the Joseph Pulitzer will invoke press freedom and say its primary concern is to inform the public and that profit is only secondary.

The trapos and the majority of our media go about with their "usual business" with no qualms whatsoever about the outcome of their actions. What they are doing is a great disservice to our nation. They are plunging it deeper into the quagmire of divisiveness, confusion and repression.

Unless the hopes change for the better, our nation is doomed to perdition.

Quo vadis, Philippines?

—ATTY. EDUARDO A. ESQUIVIAS,
ekjesquivias@yahoo.com

LETTERS

De Quiros on GMA

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE column of Conrado de Quiros who will have to stop writing negatively about the Arroyo administration.

De Quiros is well aware of the sins the government has committed against the people. He is also well aware of what is going on in our newly dying nation. Most of all, he is aware that our country is a state of "war."

He knows that keeping silent will only aggravate the problems facing our nation. He offers ideas that could help to break the impasse our country is now in. But that is a task that will never be easy to accomplish. The problems have been with us for the past 500 years.

To build a strong nation requires genuine patriotism and nationalism and love of God. But first, let us look within ourselves and ask this question, "Am I willing to fight for my country?"

If we want our nation to be great, we have to kill the old, selfish and individualist person in us. We have to bring out the selfless, patriotic person that has been sleeping within. Finding this new self will be the turning point for our country.

So, stop criticizing De Quiros, and start doing something for the country. We have a job to do and we have to do it for our nation and our sons and daughters.

—EDWARD SELDUR DIONISIO,
7 Iphi St., Maywood 1 Village,
Pasalanga City

Misleading allegations vs Bulacan gov

IN THE INTEREST OF FAIRNESS AND balanced reporting, allow me to clarify certain points raised in the news story titled "Missing permits issued by gov, says labor group," (PDI, 7/4/06). The story was not only grossly unfair to our governor, it was also misleading, to say the least. It did not present our side of the story. Our governor could have dealt light on the allegations raised against her.

• The power of the provincial governor to issue permits and licenses is clearly provided for by the Local Government Code and Sec. 71 of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

"Any qualified person may apply for a quarry permit with the Provincial Governor"(20) Mayor through the Provincial/City Mining Regulatory Board for the issuance of the corresponding quarry permit covering an area of not more than five (5) hectares for a term of five years from date of issuance."

• The issuance of the permit is systematized and deliberated on by members of the Provincial Mining and Regulatory Board (PMRB), which is composed of the regional director of the Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau (DENR-MGB) who like as chair, and four members who represent the governor (secretary), the head of the Engineering

Across the NATION

W. Visayas workers get ₱17-P20 wage increase

By Carlo F Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—THE REGIONAL TRIPARTITE Wages and Productivity Board in Western Visayas has approved a P17 to P20 increase in the daily minimum wage in the region.

Department of Labor and Employment Regional Director Carlos Bonoan said yesterday that they would release tomorrow Wage Order No. 14, which would raise by P17-P19 the daily wage level in the industrial, sugar mills sector and by P17-P19 those in the commercial and other agricultural sectors.

The new wage increase will raise the daily minimum wage in the region from P205 to P225.

The wage order shall take effect 15 days after its publication in a newspaper of regional circulation, Bonoan added.

He said the new wage order would apply to all minimum wage earners in Western Visayas except household or domestic workers and persons in the personal service of another, including family drivers and workers of registered Barangay Micro-Business Enterprises and cooperatives duly registered with Cooperative Development Authority.

The minimum wage rates prescribed under Wage Order No. 14 will be for the normal working hours that should not exceed eight hours a day, he added.

Thirty-one establishments and new business enterprises can apply for exemption from the new wage order for one year, Bonoan said.

The new wage hike, which was set to follow the P15-a day demanded by sugar industry workers and other labor groups in the region, was reached following a series of public hearings held in various parts of the region over the last month.

Bonoan said that a consensus to grant a P17-P20 daily wage increase was reached by members of the board Friday to provide the workers and their families with immediate relief, in addition to the effort of the government to hold down prices of basic goods and services to cushion the impact of recent adjustments in the value of the peso and prices of petroleum products.

Under the new order, workers in the sugar industry working in sugar mills will be getting P225 a day.

For sugar plantations, workers for plantations with capitalization of more than P3 million will receive P205 a day; those with capitalization of not more than P3 million—P195; and for non-plantation workers—P180.

Wages for non-agricultural workers in industrial or commercial establishments with capitalization of more than P3 million—P222.

MGA DIABETIKO

Release the Power of 7 Herbs – synergistically blended to provide you with essential phytonutrients, antioxidants, & fiber. ABS Bitter Herbs helps you maintain healthy blood sugar levels naturally.

'FLORITA' AFTERMATH
Farmers of Camden City loses the sole advantage of the abundant water brought about by Typhoon 'Florita' to plant rice.

Wages should be investor-friendly, says exec

DAVAO CITY—WAGE ORDERS, WHILE aimed at helping workers, are meant to be investor-friendly, a regional labor official said on Wednesday.

Gloria Tango, chair of the Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB) in Southern Mindanao, told local reporters that one thing the members considered in coming up with a wage order was to make sure it was business-friendly.

"We also consider that the [order] we issue will encourage investors to come to an area where labor cost is cheaper," Tango said.

Tango, who is also regional director of the Department of Labor and Employment, issued the statement after the board approved Wage Order No. 11-13, which granted only a P50-increase in cost of living allowance (COLA) to daily minimum wage earners in Davao.

"What we have considered were the plea of the management to adjust the COLA instead of the daily minimum wage to lessen its impact to business. The new wage order is also in line with the government's mandate to increase employment," Tango said.

Labor representatives in the board, Virginia Cuizon and George Alegarbes, said they "vehemently dissented" the decision because the adjustment was too small, but that they had to abide by the rule that a new wage order would be issued by a majority vote.

"We are very sad because the wage adjustment that was granted is very meager. We didn't expect it because what is reasonable to us is an adjustment that will fit in to the current talks on cost of living," Cuizon said.

Under the new wage order, workers employed in non-agricultural companies in cities in the Davao region will receive P240 in daily minimum pay.

For agriculture/plantation companies, workers will receive P230, while non-plantation workers will get P209.

Workers employed in retail and services with over 10 workers will receive P240 in daily minimum wage.

Factory worker Ramon Fuerzo said the new adjustment would not help them in any way.

Cuizon even called for the disbandment of the RTWPB for being "pro-management."

Tango, however, said the P825 "living wage" already included health benefits, aside from food and education.

She said that based on the computation they made in accordance with international labor laws, the P330 Cola was reasonable.

Last year, the RTWPB granted a P15 Cola to workers in Southern Mindanao.

Tango said investments in Southern Mindanao grew from P1 billion in 2004 to P4.3 billion in 2005. —Andy Quitaw, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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AURORA PUBLISHER'S KILLING

Judge told to inhibit himself from trial

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—CHIEF State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño and four prosecutors have asked a judge to inhibit himself from the trial of a mayor and three others now charged with the murder of a publisher in Aurora last year.

In an urgent motion filed on July 3, the prosecutors said Judge Amando Yango of the Regional Trial Court Branch 96 in Baler, Aurora, had "shown his bias and partiality in favor of the accused."

Zuño, state prosecutors Irene Lazaro and Leo Ibarra, and assistant provincial prosecutors Hydenkarl Cesar and Jonalyn Hernandez signed the motion.

They said Yango "dismissed" from hand the slaying of broadcaster Gerardo Ompoc without giving the complainant Philip Agustin, 41, an opportunity to present evidence.

They said the judge had told state prosecutors that Agustin was a "sham journalist." He also admitted going to the crime scene before the trial on June 27, they added.

Yango's "impressions of the deceased and his murderer foreseen to immediately terminate the proceedings ... would deprive the people of the due process of law," they said.

Interviewed by phone on Tuesday, Yango denied favoring Mayor Junee Vicente of Dingalan, Aurora, as well as the suspected gunmen Reynaldo and Nilo Moore and Manuel Abbu.

The judge manifest the prosecutors for "shooting up media."

"I did not say Agustin was a sham journalist," he said.

According to him, he encouraged Cruz to follow up her motion to transfer the trial in Manila.

His other points of being an RTC judge, Yango said, was "never tainted by a case [that was allegedly] sold or compromised."

"While sitting solemn here (I did not manipulate any decision in the cases I handled," he said.

Yango said cases under him were "always decided based on their merits."

He chided the prosecutors panel for overseeing only two of 13 witnesses even when he promised to conduct marathon hearings on the case.

Cruz said the new "archipe of getting justice" from Yango's court. Tonello Ortiz, PDI Central Luzon Desk

GMA: God will judge who has been good

By Tonette Orejas
INQ Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Eleven days to her State of the Nation Address on July 26, President Macapagal-Arroyo entertained her goal to be "a good president."

"I just want to be a good president," Ms. Arroyo said in an interview at Clark's Villard Home clan area after her flight this former American base turned economic hub to Central Luzon, her home region.

She said she did not want to make that much to history. "Because to the end, it's going to be God who will judge who has been a good and not good," she said.

Asked if she thought she was doing better as president, Ms Arroyo said, "That's what I said, But for the Lord to be satisfied till the end of my life."

This was the third time Ms Arroyo mentioned her goal. The first was about a year before the May 10, 2004 elections and the second was in a speech in an economic forum after her election. Both events were held in Clark.

At the joint meeting here of the Cabinet and the Regional Development Council in Central Luzon, which was the final consultation held for the session of the four major regions, Ms Arroyo enumerated her administration's accomplishments.

She mentioned the U.S. current account gross domestic product in the first three months of 2006. "We may be expecting 6 percent for the second quarter," she said.

She described the $55 billion in current foreign exchange reserves as "a record high." The country, she noted, needed only $29 billion to meet foreign exchange needs.

There, she said, resulted in the "stability of the Philippines and therefore, containing drawdowns of inflation in spite of the fact that world oil prices are soaring."

"We had a Senate-P10 billion budget surplus in April and P5 billion in May, the biggest in almost a decade. And yet we are expected to balance our budget by 2008 or 2010," she told governors and regional economic planners.

There has also been a marked inflow in foreign direct investments, amounting to $600 million, in the year's first four months, she said.

Exports value grew by 17 percent in May, she said.

She attributed the growth in the government's efforts to the fiscal reforms of her administration.

She said that it was through these measures that the government was now able to fund projects and programs long awaited by people and the business sector.

"At last, the investments key growth sector and business could take off. This is the key to the progress of our country and in overcoming poverty like what other developed countries in Asia and other parts of the world had shown. At last, the Filipino is ready to rise and join the league of prosperity, peace and genuine freedom," she said.

She added: "Today we shall bring that day of national resurgence closer by unleashing the great strength in our investors and development initiatives of the Metro Luzon urban beltway superregion or sub-economy as what we have already done with North Luzon, Central Philippines and Mindanao."

According to her, the results of ADC consultations would be used in the revised Medium Term Philippine Development Plan and the State.

She said public investment is the engine need to be done so the government could increase its capital stock by 10 percent a year to catch up with other Asian countries.

Government would spend 1708 billion, mostly in developing the four super regions through infrastructure, social development, security, livelihood and enterprise facilitation and good governance, she said.

These, she said, would solve the problems of employment, food and prices. The funds would come from tax and administrative reforms, she said.

FLORITA FIND
A big lizard-like mammal at the height of Spielman "Florita" is sold for P300 in Camiling City, Tarlac Bar...

Local exec in dog killing faces raps

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—A VILLAGE official is facing cases of abuse of authority and grave misconduct after he was accused of ordering the butchering of a dog owned by a resident in his village.

The complainants, Rev. Celsanon Tenorio, resident pastor of the Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ (PMCC), and Rolando M. Samaniego, barangay council member of Bonfal West, ordered the farm workers to kill his pet, a 3-year-old Labrador, in March.

Tenorio's complaint, dated June 21, was filed before the ombudsman's board.

Tenorio said the wife asked the council's counsel Pilimenon on reports from their office. They also asked the council to order the official to pay them P45,000 for the dog and another P50,000 for moral damages and cost of suit.

In their affidavit, the Tenorio couple said their dog, which was usually tied in front of their church, was able to free himself and roamed in the village for several days.

The couple said they were only informed three days later by their neighbors that their dog was hacked and killed by Israel Bautista and Arthur Rivera, farm workers of Villanueva.

Bautista and Rivera, in their affidavit, identified Villanueva as the one who ordered them to kill the dog.

They said Villanueva asked them to kill the dog because it was sneaking into his rice field.

They said they butchered the dog at the house of Villanueva's brother-in-law and divided the meat.

Villanueva, they said, got two legs and the head while the remaining parts were given to them and three more friends.

"We were drinking at the house of Villanueva's brother-in-law and were asked him what if someone would claim ownership of the dog. But he said it will be his responsibility if somebody looked for the dog," Bautista and Rivera said.

But Villanueva denied his participation in the incident, saying he was not present when his farm workers killed the dog.

"I left them and I was not going to do it my farm. I did not order them to kill the dog and I did not order any share from it. When I returned, my workers were no longer around, only our neighbor told me that my farm workers killed a dog," he said.

— Nestor Ebrao, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

New Isabela town mayor proclaimed

ILAGAN, ISABELA—A NEW MAYOR IN the most town was proclaimed on Friday after a weeklong canvassing of votes cast during the mayoral race in May 2004.

Lawyer Isidoro Bellosillo Garcia, Santiago City election officer and Ramon canvassing board chair, proclaimed Wilfredo Tabag of Democratic ng Demokratikong Pilipinas Lakas as the new mayor.

The decision came amid protests of Ramon Mayor Benjamin Espinal, after a recount of election returns from 42 precincts in the town.

The Supreme Court last year nullified Espinal's proclamation when it upheld the order of the Commission on Elections that ended his proclamation.

After the canvassing of votes, Tabag was credited with 8,228 votes while Espinal got 6,916 votes. Former Mayor Renato Vizcarra was third with 3,376 votes.

Lydia Beltran-de Leon, Espinal's lawyer, asked the board of canvassers to defer Tabag's proclamation, citing the former mayor's pending appeal to look at claims that the canvassed election returns were "spurious."

Espinal claimed that some votes cast for him were credited instead to Tabag.

But Francisco Ishayan, Tabag's lawyer, said the decision of the board of was proper.

Tabag said he said he would assume office on March.

In the May 2004 canvassing, Espinal obtained 8,617 votes while Tabag got 6,455 votes. However, the Supreme Court noted that "there was a discrepancy between the number of votes cast for the mayoral candidates and the number of votes actually cast during the last elections." — Filimeter Pascua Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Kung may itinanim, may aanihin at kakainin.

GULAYAN NG MASA

May pananim na, may training at seminar pa!
Sa tulong ng Department of Agriculture at Pamahalaang Lokal, ang mga bakuran, magiging saganang gulayan.

- Magsisimula ngayong 2006 sa 170 barangay para sa 17,000 pamilya sa mga lugar na may higit na pangangailangan gaya ng Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Masbate, Kalinga-Apayao at Zamboanga del Norte.
- Ipagpapatuloy bawat taon hanggang 2010 para maabot ang 2,163 barangay at 216,300 pamilya.

Magtanim ng gulay sa bakuran para sagana ang hapag-kainan.

Sumangguni sa pinakamalapit na tanggapan ng Department of Agriculture o Municipal Agricultural Officer o Provincial Agriculturist sa inyong lugar o tumawag sa Bureau of Plant Industry Tel. No. (02) 527-7313 o bukas ang website: www.da.gov.ph.

Proyekto ng Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo katulong ang Department of Agriculture at mga Pamahalaang Lokal

DEPED HEROES

2 teachers die helping others

[illegible]ANGA CITY—THEY could become they wanted to help others who they believed were in trouble.

The deed of the two and only teachers of the Pangapuyan II elementary School in Pangapuyan Island, about two hours by pumpboat from here, was a heroic act, according to Western Mindanao education officials who wanted to honor them.

Jessica Lagoy, 26, and Lavena Barrera-Kintanar and her son Candoa, 3, were on their way home at around 7 a.m. on July 11 from the island when they saw their boat tragedy.

Chief Insp. Hadi Jalding, chief of the Sirawai police station, said two hours before the three died, policemen clashed with a group of drug pushers led by the fleeing brothers.

Arrested

He said one of the suspects was arrested but two others were able to escape on a pumpboat.

He said the drug pushers later evaded public with the pumpboat carrying the teachers.

Jamal Nuddin, operator of the pumpboat carrying the teachers and the boy, said they noticed a motorized banca which was apparently having engine trouble.

"We approached the banca. When the two teachers saw that one of the passengers was injured, they urged me to help," Nuddin said.

But one of the men in the banca suddenly pulled a gun at them and ordered them to jump into the waters.

Apparently, the teachers did not know how to swim and struggled for their lives.

Drowning teachers

Nuddin said he wanted to help the drowning teachers and the boy but could not do anything.

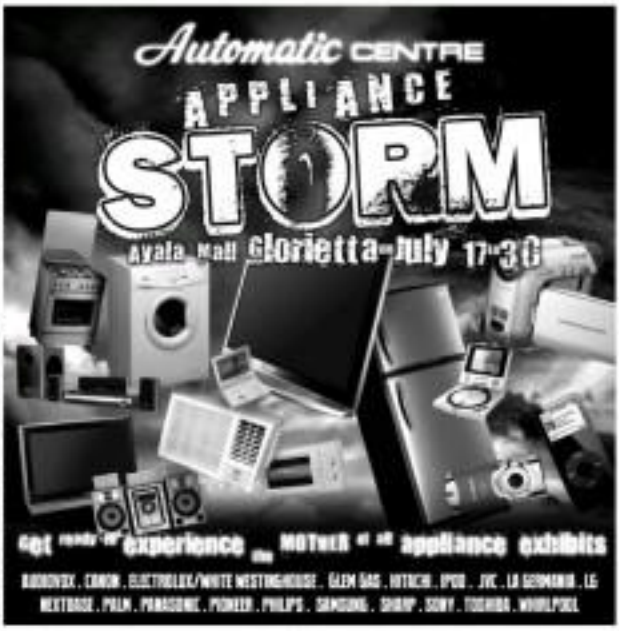
Abdu Nahim Emeh, assistant superintendent of the Zamboanga City Division, said what the two teachers did was praiseworthy.

"They risked their lives to rescue what they believed were innocent fishermen," Emeh said.

He said the death of the two teachers was also a big loss to the pupils of the Pangapuyan Elementary School.

Lagoy and Kintanar were the only teachers in the school.

"For us, they are heroes, to aside from passing the bars to help their families, we would also like to extend something," Emeh said. —Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau



Woman faces charges of 'special child' abuse

PASAY[illegible] CITY—A NON-GOVernment group working for abused children and women is preparing charges against a woman who has been repeatedly burning her 10-year-old stepdaughter.

Katherine Sarabia, legal aide of Bakladan, said her group had started gathering evidence to send the woman to jail for physically abusing her child.

The victim, considered a special child, has threatened to commit suicide as she could no longer bear the abuses, according to Sarabia.

Sarabia said the mother could be sued under Republic Act No. 7610 for the law protecting children against abuse. Even if the daughter is already 18 years old, she is still protected under the law, she explained.

The law defines children as persons below 18 or those above 18, who are unable to take care of themselves, the said. Blind, deaf and children with mental disabilities are some of the examples of special child's[illegible].

Emma Sevilleno, who teaches at a school for special children called the Hospicio Kalinaw, said the 26-year-old arrived on Thursday with bruises and contusions in the arms and legs.

"We learned about her condition when her classmates reported to us that Angel (not her real name) was crying and has pain in the stomach," Sevilleno told the Inquirer.

Sevilleno said the student was threatening to commit suicide, prompting school officials to report the case to Bakladan and to police.

Lucy Espinosa, another teacher, said Angel, through sign language, had indicated "it is better to die than be beaten by her mother again."

She said it was not the first time she saw Angel with bruises.

She said Angel was also being abused by her siblings.

"We already suspected that the child is a victim of physical abuse but she avoided talking [about her situation] until last Thursday," she said.

Sevilleno said the teachers had found that the father, a money-lender and single parent, would blame Angel every time part of his collections was missing.

She said Angel had told them that her brothers took the money.

Sevilleno said Angel had tried to tell her mother about it but she could not understand sign language.

Sarabia said Angel's mother would also be subjected to the[illegible] welfare office. Michael Sarmiento, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Caraga villages know little of domestic violence law

SAN FRANCISCO, AGUSAN DEL Sur—Many village officials in Caraga region still know little about the law aimed at protecting women and children from domestic violence, according to[illegible] government officials.

Imelda[illegible] Tungaon, regional operation officer of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, said only 17 of the 1,008 barangay chairs were familiar with Republic Act No. 9262 or the ANTI-Violence Against Women and Children Act, two years after it was signed into law.

Tungaon said that only the 17 village officials were nominated to have been leading Barangay Protection Duties (BPDs), which has perpetrators of domestic violence from further committing abuses.

She said the DILG had conducted an information drive about the law in at least 60 barangays throughout.

But it seems that there was not enough for barangay officials to start acting against domestic violence, she said.

Of the four provinces in Caraga, Agusan del Sur has the most number of barangays that have issued BPOs, particularly in the towns of San Francisco, Sta. Josefa and Trento.

In Surigao del Sur, only three barangays were issuing the BOOs, two in Surigao del Norte, and none in Agusan del Norte.

Surigao City has three barangays issuing the BPOs, Butuan City, two and Bislig City none, although orientation briefings had already been conducted there, Tungaon said.

A high incidence of attacks on women and minors has been recorded in the region, especially in the[illegible]reside, she said.

Records at the provincial jail in Agusan del Sur revealed that from January to May 22, at least 30 inmates faced rape charges. A number of incest cases or acts sexually abusing their daughters were also noted. Chris Pangaan, Jun, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Dengue deaths up in Central Visayas–DOH

CEBU CITY—ALTHOUGH CASES OF dengue fever in Central Visayas have declined in the first half of the year compared to last year, deaths attributed to the mosquito-borne disease have risen during the same period, according to a regional health official.

The number of deaths rose to 25 from Jan. 1 to July 12, or 72 percent higher than the 14 recorded over the same period last year, Romeo Omaweno, regional epidemiologist of the Department of Health, said.

However, he said, the number of cases had gone down by 51 percent, from 1,440 last year to 710 this year. Thus, the overall dengue situation in the region was not alarming, he stressed.

Omaweno said most patients had died because they were not immediately brought to doctors and had suffered reinfection.

Children who had been afflicted with dengue in the past are at risk of getting infected again, he said. Reinfection is more dangerous, he said, because the patient's resistance had already been weakened.

Most of the deaths occurred in the city, including two boys from a rural village in the mountain barangay of Kalubihan who died between June and July, and another boy, aged 5, from the village who died June 30 at a private hospital here.

A 5-year-old boy also died June 18 in Barangay Tigbilo, Bamban[illegible], Cebu.

Two sisters, aged 3 and 5, from Barangay Looc in Mandaue City also died from dengue complications on June 30 and July 3, DOH records showed.

Mandaue health affair Oscar Quirante said Looc had been declared a dengue hot spot. He attributed the spread of the disease to stagnant water, the breeding ground for mosquitoes, in the defective drainage system.

No cases of dengue were reported in Looc last year, he noted.

Quirante said his office had already asked the city engineering department to repair the drainage facility.

Cleofitacion urged the different health units in the region to sustain their campaigns against the killer disease. Last month, health officials launched the Dengue Prevention Month at the onset of the rainy season.

To prevent dengue, the DOH urged everyone to cooperate in the daily cleanup of surroundings, especially in areas where the dengue-carrying mosquito could breed. Jhunnex Napallacan, PIA Visayas bureau

FLOOD OF JOY
Children of Barangay Mines in Lutac, Lu Libon enjoy their flooded backyard as the height of Typhoon "Florita."

Gloria defended on super regions

By Carlo P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon came to the defense of President Macapagal-Arroyo for her creation of four "super regions" amid allegations that it could just be a ploy to deflect the people's attention from moves to impeach her.

The four regions are South Luzon, Metro Luzon, Central Philippines and Mindanao.

The Central Philippines mega-region is composed of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan or Region 4-B), Bicol (5), Western Visayas (6), Central Visayas (7) and Eastern Visayas (8).

"At least she makes plans for the country. She has some objectives, she has some visions, as to how she will achieve it, that is another story," the governor said.

Consolidation

Marañon said the uneven regional structures would remain, as joining several regions under one super region is just for consolidating projects and for planning.

Among the programs in the mega-zone, development plans are the proposed bridges that would interconnect Pulupi, Negros, Cebu and Bohol, he said.

"The building of the bridges is quite ambitious because the financial requirements are huge but at least they have been included in the master plan. Before, we were told we were just dreamers and now a feasibility study is under way," he said.

Development

Bienvenido (Pin-pin) Laurel, president of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, also believed that super regions were good because they would hasten development.

"There is nothing bad that can come out of this. It will just highlight the need to decentralize to spur development in the countryside," added Mayor Alfonso Gamboa of Ilagan (Isabela) in Region (Isabela).

GMA wants to turn 4 cities, Clark zone into cyber corridor

By Tonette Orejas
PhilStar Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—On top of the four planned super regions, President Macapagal-Arroyo announced the creation of a cyber corridor covering the areas of Baguio, Cebu, Davao and Manila and the Clark Special Economic Zone.

The development of this corridor, which hosts many top call centers and outsourcing companies, will be supported through additional digital infrastructures, Mrs Arroyo said during a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the Regional Development Council in Central Luzon on Thursday.

The funds she said would come from portions of the P760 billion earmarked for public investments in the super regions of Metro Luzon, North Luzon, Central Philippines and Mindanao.

North Luzon said Mrs Arroyo was allotted as funds for agriculture-based businesses.

Metro Luzon—comprising Subic and Clark, Metro Manila, Calabarzon, Batangas, southern portions of Nueva Ecija and Aurora and Mindoro and Marinduque islands—is designed as the urban belt being which will be fitted with new highways, railways, airports and seaports.

At least 16 percent of the country's gross domestic product comes from these areas, Mrs Arroyo said.

Infrastructure facilities in Central Philippines, where 10 percent of tourists have been flocking, will be improved to enhance the tourism potentials there.

"This is not political. We are not disturbing the regional development councils or structures. We are dividing the whole Philippine economy into four sub-economies based on their competitive advantage," Mrs Arroyo said before presiding over the final regional consultations here.

The Philippines is ready to undertake the development of sub-economies because the national economy is now in order due to tax and administrative reforms, she said.

She cited the 1.5 percent increase in GDP in the first three months, the $21 billion in foreign exchange reserves, the P16 billion budget surplus in April, the $500 million in foreign direct investments from January to April, and the 17 percent growth in exports for the same period.

The President said government investments in public infrastructure, social development, security, livelihood and entrepreneurial efforts and good governance aimed to increase the nation's capital stock by 18 percent a year to catch up with the public investment rate of other Asian countries.

Central Philippines 'super region' infrastructure to cost P300 billion

By Irene R. Sito-Cruz
PhilStar Bureau

CEBU CITY—INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREments for the first super development of Central Philippines would reach P300 billion, according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo L. Neri.

Neri, who was interviewed after the joint Regional Development Council (RDC) and Cabinet meeting held on July 7 at the Mabolo Garden in Sagbo here, said part of the amount would come from the government and the rest from the private sector through a build-operate-transfer scheme.

He could not say, however, how much of the amount would come from the government. The key infrastructure projects for Central Philippines include construction or rehabilitation of roads, ports, airports, power, irrigation and broadband projects, Neri said.

During the opening of the joint RDC-Cabinet meeting, President Macapagal-Arroyo launched the Central Philippines—composed of the Western, Bicol, Eastern and Northern Visayas and the Mindanao islands of Dinagat and Siargao—as the tourism center of the Philippines.

The President said the government must increase investments in education and infrastructure to make Central Philippines the tourism hub.

"In their competitive advantage, we will bolster education, invest in infrastructure and encourage greater investments in agriculture, business process outsourcing in Cebu and its immediate neighbors, like Dumaguete," Ms Arroyo said.

During the RDC-Cabinet meeting, Neri said the national government identified several areas for Central Philippines.

These include harnessing the vast coastal and marine resources and addressing the small islands' fragile ecosystem; linking the islands through efficient transportation and communication facilities; promoting the Southern Tourism Center; developing the potentials of agribusiness, airport and small and medium enterprises; pursuing responsible mining and quarrying; optimizing power potentials and ensuring adequacy and sustainability of the supply; and enhancing social services.

During a presentation on Central Philippines, Neri noted that the region accounted for 29 percent of the country's total coastline. It has several rich fishing grounds, such as the Visayan Sea, Lamon Bay, Lagonoy Gulf, Sorsogon Bay, Bohol Sea, Sibuyan Sea, Iloilo Strait, Tañon Strait, Samar Sea and Leyte Gulf.

The Central Philippines' share in the country's total fish production is 37 percent.

The government is also proposing the establishment of manufacturing parks in the agro-regions. Mariculture is the cultivation of marine organisms for food.

In addition to the 13 existing parks, the government plans to set up manufacture parks in Samar, Camotes Island in Cebu, Bohol, Negros and Palawan.

Central Philippines also contributes 21.6 percent of gross domestic product, he added. Its growth centers include Metro Naga, Metro Legazpi, Metro Tacloban, the cities of Metro Ormoc, Iloilo, Bacolod, Dumaguete and Tagbilaran, and Metro Cebu.

The socioeconomic planner also plans to improve the linkages of the existing national highway by developing or rehabilitating lateral roads that connect to existing or proposed ports with rail or, rail all facilities.

The implementation of the national infrastructure projects is expected to reduce travel time from Mindanao through Visayas to Luzon, and vice versa, by 30 hours.

Gov't to stop aiding kin of victims of sea tragedy

LEGAZPI CITY—RELATIVES OF victims of the May 12 sinking of the MB Blue Aqua 1 off Manlawe City in the Bicol of tragedy may "Cukay" can expect only limited help from the government in terms of financial assistance, the Office of Civil Defense said.

The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) has released a memorandum ordering a stop to the payment of bequests for financial assistance.

NDCC executive officer Elmer Bahinting blamed the sea tragedy on the boat's owner, skipper, boat and stokes unlike who, he said, deserve the ones to help the victims' relatives.

Last month, relatives of the 27 passenger victims were at a loss on how to claim compensation from the vessel's owner, Lobrigo Shipping Lines (LSL). With this bond, NDCC memorandum, their hope for government assistance has been dashed away, too.

Bernie Lobrigo of LSL said he had already extended financial assistance to 19 of the victims. However, he said there was a limit to what the company could give.

"We cannot shoulder every thing because it will be unreasonable to our admission that the tragedy was all our fault, when, in fact, it was just an accident," Lobrigo said in a phone interview.

Those who have not yet received compensation will also be paid, Lobrigo said, but he would not say when.

DCD reminded police officer Chevvy Alonzo has clarified the NDCC policies on financial assistance.

• It covers only casualties of natural disasters, such as typhoons, floods, earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, lightnings and epidemics.

• Victims of manmade disasters, such as fires, vehicular accidents, bombings, air and sea accidents, are not covered.

• Relatives of the dead will receive P50,000, while P5,000 will be given to the injured. The amounts will be drawn from the NDCC calamity fund.

• All claims are only valid within one year from the time the disaster or calamity occurred.

Zphraim Apodaca, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

GMA orders probe of land price hike at interchange site

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE —President Macapagal-Arroyo on Thursday ordered an investigation into the increase in the value of land at the future site of the interchange of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx) in Mabalacat, Pampanga.

In an interview by local radio stations, the President said she had instructed Finance Secretary Margarito Teves to investigate the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the landowner for increasing the assessed value from P1,000 to P10,000 per square meter.

The new price, Ms Arroyo said, would cost the government nearly P1 billion to acquire the land.

The SCTEx, a 94-km highway being built on a P23-billion loan from Japan, connects the Subic Bay Freeport in Bataan and Zambales, the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga and Tarlac, and the Luisita Industrial Park in Tarlac City.

The four-lane road passes through nine towns and two cities in Bataan, Pampanga and Tarlac.

According to Ms Arroyo, Narciso Moya, president and chief executive officer of the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA), has requested a "reminiscence" between the BIR and the landowner, who was not named. The BCDA is the proponent of the SCTEx, one of the Arroyo administration's flagship projects.

"This is bad for the development of the whole region. This is embarrassing to the world which is monitoring the project," Ms Arroyo said.

"Those who are jacking up the personal real property are not helping us in any way," she said in Filipino.

She cited the problem again at a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the Regional Development Council in Central Luzon, also on Thursday.

"The project is one close[-to-us] thing, with the Subic-Clark segment to be opened in November 2007 and the Clark-Tarlac segment by August next year.

At the new road makes the Clark airport and the Subic seaport less than 60 minutes away, Ms Arroyo expects the area to become a "new Ayala," referring to the business district the Ayala family has developed out of Makati City.

This, she added, was why she took in Francisco Lacsamana III, former Ayala Land Inc. president, as head of the Subic-Clark Alliance Development Council (Scad).

Lacsamana resigned last year over supposed meddling by politicians in the economic development of the two economic zones.

"This will be the most viable road access to the coming years because of the economic developments we are relocating in the area," Ms Arroyo said.

Supporting the plan she announced in her State of the Nation Address in 2005, she said Subic and Clark, as a single growth corridor, would be the most efficient logistics hub in Southeast Asia.

"This is where we must do. This is our vision and we should all contribute to this vision," she said.

Secretary Edgardo Pantoncan, Scad chief, told Ms Arroyo that the council was fine-tuning the promotion of the Subic-Clark growth area.

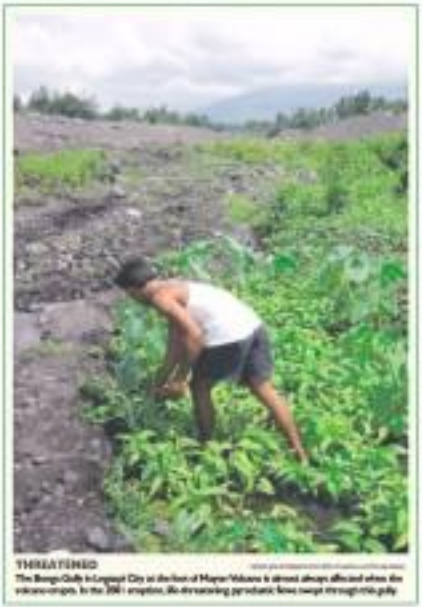
"We all have to make it happen," Ms Arroyo said.

In a statement on Thursday, Abaya urged local governments to "start planning" for the opening of the SCTEx.

The planning, he said, would "ensure that no windfall can be left on from the socio-economic benefits that come with the country's largest toll road to date."

"We expect investors to take notice of the convergence of air, sea and land transport and eventually put up shop in Clark, Subic and other economic zones and industrial parks in Central Luzon, including those that will be established along the Subic-Clark corridor," he said.

Abaya said the BCDA did not want local governments to be competing for the same investors in a climate of cut-throat competition. —Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk



THREATENED
The Bonga Gulch in Legazpi City at the foot of Mayon Volcano is almost always affected when the volcano erupts. In the 2001 eruption, the devastating pyroclastic flows swept through this gully.

₱165-M scam case not moving in Ombudsman

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—TWO YEARS after graft complaints were filed in connection with the P165-million Talibon Bom scam, the Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas is still hung up on its file a single case in court.

The Bohlanons Against Corruption, Oppression and Social Harassment (Bacos) on Saturday lamented that the case had not progressed at the Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas since they filed charges against irrigation official here on June 16, 2004 over alleged anomalies in the release of funds for the construction of the P165-million Talibon Small Irrigation Project.

"This is an anniversary statement of both pain and hope," declared Bacos in a statement issued Friday.

The statement was signed by supporters Petronilo Sangcanha and lawyer Artemio Cabasco, Bacos spokesperson and chair, respectively.

Bacos filed the complaint against provincial irrigation officer Calixto Bersoy and all those responsible for the ghost project in Barangay Jamoro, Talibon town.

It said the funding allocation had been used up, but the structure was still nowhere to be found.

The group recalled that "after canvassing months of investigation, which we found unusual," the Ombudsman (Visayas) finally came up with a Fact Finding Report finding prima facie evidence against Bersoy and, possibly other National Irrigation Administration officials.

"Of course, those of us who have spent long years in vindicating people's rights and protecting them against unlawful incursion by corrupt officials danced to the heavens over that positive development," Bacos said.

To its dismay however, Bacos said that no charges had been filed in court in connection with the case.

"Two years of waiting is far from the ordinary, leading us to suspect that certain 'powerful' officials of President Macapagal-Arroyo's regime are dipping their malicious hands into the case," Bacos added.

Bacos said the failure of the Ombudsman to act on the case was a "big blow" to the government's 10-year-old campaign against corruption.

Villagers in landslide-prone areas in Laguna won't leave

By Ronnie O. Perez
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SAN PEDRO, LAGUNA—DESPITE WARNINGS FROM government geologists and officers of local officials to move from its side grounds, some residents of Barangay Landayan here who might be affected by the loosening of mountain soil are reluctant to abandon their homes.

Danilo is 3 km by banca or 1.5 km by land from the town proper, which is 21 km from the provincial capitol.

Betty Ancenta, 62, widow and whose family is one of those affected, suggested that the evacuation should only be temporary, that is, only during rainy days.

Many of the houses that might be affected are big and that their occupants had spent large sums of money for their construction and maintenance she said.

Geologists from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau earlier urged the residents to evacuate after completing on March 30 an inspection of a 300-meter crack in a landslide-prone mountain here.

The experts were accompanied by Barangay Councilors Jesus Aaron de Guia and Marlene Sto and deputy chief Barangay Israel Carlito Alvarez during the inspection.

Landslide

The MGB and local officials fear that the mountain's current condition could result in a disaster like that in Guinsaugon, Southern Leyte, in February, where a landslide buried alive about 800 people.

Their urgent appeal prompted provincial, municipal and barangay officials to join hands in offering a once of land for relocation, financial assistance and materials for the construction of houses to 64 families who will evacuate.

Mayor Juanita Hernandez and Danilo chair Rolando Corales and their councils were able to find a relocation site for the evacuees.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will supply the posts and lumber for the construction of the houses, said Maria Ilee Ramos, municipal planning and management coordinator.

Ancenta said the residents were asked to transfer to a 40-sqm relocation site and would be given P15,000 each, provided they immediately demolish their houses and use the old materials to build new homes.

She said that when her husband was still alive four years ago, he had told her about the crack in the mountain but it was only a few meters long and the county was narrow.

Today she was told that the crack had stretched to 300 meters long and the gap could swallow scores or families.

Chief geologist Elmer Billedo and supervising geologist Rolando Ramos said in their report that Danilo is situated along the eastern margin of the Sahagun Peninsula, which is along the path of transverse local faults. Danilo is south of the convergence point of three faults.

The mountainous area affected by the slides is composed of lavalded rocks collectively called the Guadalupe Formation of Pleistocene. These rocks are moderately to highly fractured and jointed.

Numerous small and large-scale landslides have occurred in the village.

The MGB officials theorized that the landslides could have happened in November 2004, probably on the same day when landslides and flood occurred in the municipalities of Real, Infanta and General Nakar in Quezon province.

Relocation

They strongly recommended several mitigation measures, like the relocation of all residents and structures now found directly at the base of the slide debris and the "cracked" hillslope before the La Niña phenomenon gets worse.

The officials advised against visits in farms and households properties during heavy rains.

They further recommended the construction of drainage canals along the sides and heads of the slide debris to divert surface runoff that may accelerate the occurrence of massive landflow.

There is also a need to pile up boulders and cobbles like riprap along the walls of the canals adjacent to the slide debris, they added.

The MGB experts urged the planting of solid species of broad leaf trees and other grass species over the slide debris, as well as the commercial "banira" or rubber trees in the faces of the slides so that their root systems could bind rock fragments and soil together.

Salvador Samonte, 45, a barangay kagawad of Danglas, however, questioned the geologists' reports, which, he said, was exaggerated, giving the impression that their village's condition was very serious.

"The cracks have been there for so many years, maybe about 20 years already, but nothing has happened to that mountain. Maybe due to the natural movements of the mountain, which forms a terrace-like layer each time the soil moves downward," he said.

Samonte said five smaller cracks were also in the mountaintop. "But I guess those are not necessarily reasons for worry," he said.

SEVERAL landslide scars experienced every time there is a heavy downpour put Pangil, Laguna villagers at the foot of the mountain at risk. RONNIE PEREZ/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Quezon cops lack guns vs NPA

LUCENA CITY—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's marching orders to the Philippine National Police to conduct full offensives against New People's Army rebels has been met with cynicism by the police corps of Quezon province, a known stronghold of communist insurgents in Southern Luzon.

"That order is a big joke. How can we conduct offensives against the enemy when most of us do not even have government-issued guns? And for those fortunate to have received one, most of the time, they are the ones who buy their own ammunitions," a junior police officer assigned in the Bondoc Peninsula told CBN bureau.

The official requested anonymity for fear of reprisal from his superiors.

"Not having a service firearm is common among soldiers but there are also others who have spent quite a number of years in the service but still don't have government-issued guns," he claimed.

"The reality here is that one still needs to pull strings in order to have a service firearm. And we're here in Quezon where the NPA abounds," the policeman lamented.

A ranking policeman stationed in one of the island-town police stations also disclosed the same predicament.

"We could not even conduct target shooting practice. We have to save precious bullets for any eventuality," said the policeman, who also requested anonymity when interviewed by the bureau in provincial police headquarters in Camp Kalaw here.

The Communist Party of the Philippines has said that policemen here have been the major suppliers of firearms of its military arm, the NPA, as a result of raids on remote headquarters and "lone-armed" operations.

Police provincial director Senior Supt. Victorio Caragay Jr. acknowledged the shortage of firearms and communications equipment among the ranks of his policemen.

"It's the bitter reality that the untested police officials are now trying to address," Caragay said.

He explained that with the expected infusion of fresh funds from the national government to upgrade the armories of police stations across the country, the 500 rebels would now think twice before attacking policemen.

"In the next few months, we expect the arrival of additional firearms, communications equipment and police vehicles to bolster our town's combat capability," Caragay said.

Last week, the President signed Executive Order No. 546, ordering the PNP to actively support the Armed Forces of the Philippines in internal security operations.

Military and police officials set a short-term deadline to wipe out insurgency in critical areas of Southern Luzon and Southern Tagalog, specifically Quezon province. Jeffre T. Mollet Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Quezon village execs hesitant to join anti-NPA war

LUCENA CITY—THE ASSOCIation of village chairs in Quezon province opposed hesitance to follow President Macapagal-Arroyo's order for the country's barangay officials to take an active role in the government's anti-insurgency operations.

"We have been discussing this situation long before President Arroyo issued her executive order, and the consensus of the organization was that of hesitance due to fear of personnel and family safety," Quezon Board Member Ned Tan, president of the province's barangay league, said in a mobile phone interview.

Quezon is widely known as a stronghold of the New People's Army. "Since we become totally involved in counter-insurgency operations, we will be facing a tremendous risk," Tan said.

Tan said that were if the government provided arms, most of the village officials would not be receptive to the idea.

"Providing us arms would only invite the other side (NPA) to hold us more in the front of sight," he said.

Tan said he would immediately call for another meeting in the light of the recent issuance of Executive Order No. 546 directing police and village officials to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the fight against insurgency.

"I understand that we have to follow the order as part of our responsibilities as government officials," Tan said.

He said the village officials would await the issuance of guidelines for the implementation of the executive order.

"We want to know from the DILG (Department of the Interior and Local Government) what functions will be imposed on those who will not follow the order," Tan said.

In an earlier interview, Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez, who represents the Bondoc Peninsula, an NPA stronghold in the province, did not share Mr. Arroyo's optimism that the insurgents would be wiped out in a couple of years.

The NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, is estimated by the military to be 7,400 strong.

Suarez maintained that the ultimate defeat of the rebels lies on solving agrarian conflict in the country.

"As long as the agrarian issue is not settled, as long as there is a landed estate in the thousand of hectares, insurgency will never die," he said in an interview.

He said peace could not come from the bullets of an M-16 rifle. "Military victory is not the answer."

Suarez said the government would only gain "temporary victory" with the P1 billion "all-out war" budget.

Quezon Rep. Lorenzo "Erin" Tañada III, earlier said the "war and death fund" would only mean the escalation of killings, hatred, disappropriation, more casualties and displaced families.

Tañada feared that his home province would be transformed into a battleground where only the people will lose, not only their homes and properties but also their lives and their families. Jeffre T. Mollet Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

TRAPPED AND TAGGED Agriculture Undersecretary Rafael Bernardo Jr. (left) and Quezon Administrator Rafael Bernardo Valdis (Commodity Interviews) as Marilyn Banda of Community Environment and Natural Resources Office in Gen. K. B. Esberman turned over the turtle, an endangered species, to authorities after it was trapped in a fish net in the city's Barangay Pugom.

ROUNDUP

School materials for tribes

BASILAN CITY—Determined to improve the quality of education for indigenous communities, the Department of Education is preparing learning materials for what it calls "indigenous peoples (IP) education." The program is part of the DepEd's thrust to address 100 percent functional literacy rate in the country through alternative learning systems, Dr. Carolina Guerrero, director of the Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems, said in a recent briefing here.

The indigenous learning materials, which are anchored on tradition and customary environmental laws, will be tested in September in six indigenous communities that the department will consider, she said. Guerrero (Mindoro) and Tausugs are among the provinces that will first benefit from the project, she said.

Delmar Varela, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Stain radioman's case

LAOAG CITY—Records of cases broadcaster Angel Morales have been sent to the regional trial court in Manila in compliance with a Supreme Court order for the latter case there to transfer the venue of the hearings. Judge Benjamin Tungaro said the records to Manila on June 19, more than a month after the Supreme Court's first decision granted the petition of the victim's relatives, Morales, for a change of venue. Sister Marianne was gunned down on July 31, 2004, as an aftermath of the broadcast, DYFM Radyo Bandido and Bambi Vadan, had been held. The two are awaiting an order for their transfer from the provincial jail to Manila.

Cristina de Leon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Beached whale dies

LABRADOR, Zambales—A giant whale that beached on the shore of Barangay Lasagahan died on July 11. Fishermen found the 4.5-meter whale (Physeteridae) unchained, moaning while swimming toward the beach, said Abraham Pulioso, deputy district officer of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Pulioso said the fishermen described the whale as weak and tried to push the 6000-kilogram whale into deeper water but it returned to the beach. A team of scientists from Ocean Adventure at the Subic Bay Freeport tried to revive the whale but failed.

Oscar Villa, PDI Central Luzon Desk

BIR man loses tax take

SORSOGON CITY—Three armed robbers took some P232,000 in tax collections from an employee of the Bureau of Internal Revenue's (BIR) Office here on Thursday. The victim, Rina Cayanan-Bernardo, told police that she was accosted by the gang after she alighted from a tricycle in front of the BIR office in Barangay Rizal-Balogo at about 2:30 p.m. She said two of the robbers pulled handguns at her head and demanded that she hand over her collections, representing documentary taxes and certification fees. The robbers fled on a motorcycle.

Bobby O. Labales, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Rebels bag alleged rapist-killer

MALAYBALAY, Bukidnon—Alleged rebels have captured an alleged serial rapist-killer in Buenavista, Dapi-Manka here on Thursday. The Moro-Islamic Liberation Front's Commander Bond reportedly turned over Tony Peralta, 31, to Gov. Miguel Zaldivar. Peralta was being hunted by combat troops for nearly 2 years for alleged involvement in several rape and homicide cases. When the MILF learned that Peralta was hiding in Dapi-Manka, it launched a manhunt. The MILF has signed an agreement with the government to help in anti-crime operations in areas where it maintains a presence as part of its efforts to boost the peace process.

Apollo Z. Zosa, PDI Mindanao Bureau

OIC postpones Jeddah meet

KUWAIT CITY—The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has postponed a tripartite meeting tentatively set in Jeddah and aimed at forming an Intra-Moro MILF peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It cited the busy schedule for the postponement. The meeting was called after OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu commented during his pan-Islamic body's summit in Mecca, Southern last month that the accord was a failure. The OIC said it wanted to help address any loopholes that continued to hinder the successful implementation of the pact, which ended the MNLF rebellion after 20 years. The MNLF has complained that the lives of its members have not improved and that development was slow in its communities.

Jacilyn Mabini, PDI Mindanao Bureau

OFW appeals for return of passport

DANILO MARTIN, 28, of San Nicolas, Sta. Ana, Pampanga met his Philippine adviser (PH 027-9405) on July 5 in Dubai Fernando, Pampanga when he was applying for a short-term absence at the Israel Lanes' transportation Office. Martin, crisis-stricken in Saudi Arabia, is asking kind-hearted people to return his travel documents so he could go back to his work. He can be contacted at 0916-2763533 or at his address at 127 San Nicolas, Sta. Ana, Pampanga.

NEWS

GMA flies to Libya for 3-day state visit

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO BEGAN HER STATE visit to Libya yesterday, saying that she was looking forward to meeting Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi and seeking energy cooperation ventures with Tripoli.

According to a statement released by the Palace yesterday, Ms Arroyo in the first Philippine president to make a state visit to Libya in 30 years.

The President left for Libya from Brunei where she and other world leaders attended the 60th birthday of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah.

Acknowledging the role that Libya played in the peace process in Mindanao, which eventually saw Manila forging peace with the Moro National Liberation Front in 1996, Ms Arroyo said Tripoli "wields a deep influence in the social and religious life of Muslim Mindanao and we see it as a blessing here to remove our people from the trenches of destruction and conflict.

"Col. Gadhafi and I share the same vision of a peaceful and prosperous world, and I look forward to meeting him personally at a time when we resolved to join hands in fighting terror and poverty not only in the Philippines but in our regional neighborhood," the President said.

"I aim to make our relations with Libya a key element in peace and development in Mindanao as we forge ahead with the "mega" regions that will carry the Philippines to full world status in 20 years."

Ms Arroyo was referring to the four provinces that represent the four "integrated regional groupings" which Malacañang is planning to turn into "investment and development areas." These are North Luzon (which covers Regions I, 2 and the Cordillera Autonomous Region), plus Aurora and Nueva Ecija), Metro Luzon (Region 3, 4A and Metro Manila), Central Philippines (Region 4B, 5, 6, 7 and 8) and Mindanao (Regions 9 to 11 and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao).

The President also said that her government intended to seek energy cooperation ventures with Libya.

"As a model of increasing resource constraints, we aim to ensure Libya's assurance for oil supply at a 'friendly price,' especially in the event of market disruptions," Ms Arroyo said.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President's trip to Libya had become "more relevant in our bid to ensure steady supplies and prices of imported crude oil."

He added that Ms Arroyo was grateful to Libya for supporting Manila's bid to attain an observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Ms Arroyo also said she would ask the Libyan government for more protection for the 8,000 overseas Filipino workers there.

GMA AND BOLKIAH President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is escorted by Brunei's Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah during the banquet Saturday night in honor of the Sultan's 60th birthday celebration at the Istana Nural Iman in Brunei Darussalam.

Asia, European countries hold interfaith meeting

By Tarra V. Quismundo

JAKARTA—DESPITE SOME RECENT CLASHES between Europe and Asia adopted this month, an action plan to pursue interfaith harmony—stressed a borderless necessity since religion was consistently being used to justify violence.

Meeting for the second time—the first was in the Mediterranean island country of Cyprus, some 200 government officials, religious leaders, academicians and media practitioners laid down the Jakarta Action Plan or Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation for a Peaceful World.

The program emphasized the role of governments, religious institutions, schools, the media, and the everyman in attaining global harmony among religions.

The document was the result of the three-day second Interfaith Dialogue of the Asia Europe Meeting (Asem). Delegates from 25-member states of the European Union and 13 Asian countries engaged in an informal process of dialogue to strengthen ties between the two regions in the aspects of economy, politics, culture, education and religion.

"We must translate theory into practical steps that will carry the results of our discussions beyond the walls of our conference rooms and into the daily lives of our people. The emphasis should be on the tangible, ongoing development of understanding and cooperation on more level," said Cyprus President Tassos Papadopoulos at the opening plenary on July 3.

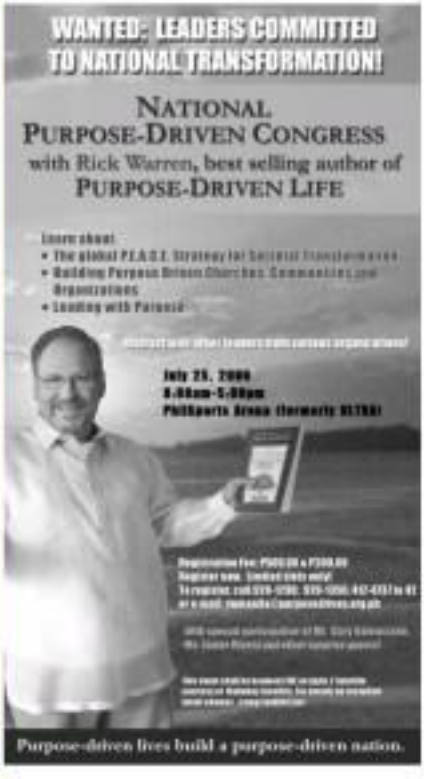
The dialogue was held just as the world prepared to mark the first anniversary of the July 7, 2005 bombings in London, where 52 people were killed and 700 were injured. The incident had been viewed as a consequence of religious radicalism.

"We can sit back and let [the increased contact peoples of diverse faiths and cultures] be exploited by radicals from all sides, used as a vehicle to promote their distinct agenda ... or we can harness its power, by actively promoting dialogue as a means of improving our mutual understanding," Papadopoulos told the delegates.

The action plan, a result of two days of meetings among separate working groups, contained 12 points tackling three aspects: interfaith understanding, the role of media in promoting interfaith harmony, and religion and the interaction within multicultural societies.

Organizers considered the plan approved in the final plenary on July 5 even while some delegates stood to object, questioning what they called the lack of transparency in deliberations of the final drafting committee and the lack of democracy in the process of adopting it.

Members of the Philippine delegation felt there was "a problem of process" as the drafting committee no longer sought the vote of the plenary for the final version.



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NGO helps 'tarpaulin cases' start life afresh

Human trafficking victims undergo IT training

By Jocelyn R. Uy

ROSE A. SAPUNGUE BUTIA, AKA MARIA, young girls are learning new skills that would provide them with a source of livelihood.

Once the training is completed, volunteers in the safehouse hope the girls can be ready to be reunited to the mainstream of society without fear of being exploited by human traffickers.

Liza, 16, one of the girls inside the safehouse, recalled the day she became a "tarpaulin case."

A few years ago, she and 19 other young girls from Dumbanog del Sorte were rounded into two jeepneys bound for Matnog, Sorsogon.

Liza said she was supposed to be in school that day, but because of her desire to help her family, she found herself inside one of the jeeps.

High-paying jobs

A few days before, a woman had gone to their town with the promise of high-paying jobs in Metro Manila.

Liza said she jumped at the chance of a better life for her and her family. On the day of their departure, she and the other girls got on to two jeepneys that were to about six hours of once a barge bound for the Matnog port. From there, the woman told them they would be taken to the big city.

Just before the trip started, the woman warned the girls: If someone asks, be about your age. She also told them not to make any noise during the entire trip.

A pall of gloom descended on the children as the jeeps were covered with tarpaulin to hide them from prying eyes. In the next few hours, they were only allowed to get out of the vehicle and stretch their legs three times—when the barge stopped over in Lipata, Sorsogon; Liloan, Taytay and Allen, Northern Samar.

The rest of the time, Liza and the other girls sat in the dark, taking in shallow breaths as they endured the stifling heat.

'Tarpaulin cases'

The girls had become "tarpaulin cases," among the numerous incidents of human trafficking in the country recorded by the Visayan Forum Foundation (VFF), a private organization.

A YOUNG girl, one of over 10,000 children rescued by a nongovernment organization from human trafficking syndicates, recovers from her ordeal in a safehouse somewhere in Manila.

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Woman, 4 children killed in QC fire

By DJ Yap and Margaux C. Ortiz

A WOMAN DIED ALONE WITH her four children aged five to 13 years old in a fire in Quezon City early yesterday morning.

Killed were Isabella Hernandez, 48 and her children Brenda, 13, Janice, 12, Ronald, 7 and Gerson, 5, said PO2 Rosendo Cabillan of the Bureau of Fire Protection in Quezon City.

Roberto, Isabella's husband, survived and was taken to the hospital for the second degree burns he sustained when he tried to get into the burning house, the investigator added.

The two-hour blaze started at 2:20 a.m., neighboring from the living room of the bungalow-type house at 1536 Joshua St., Justice Plains in Sta Monica, Novaliches, fire officials said.

It spread quickly, leaving no time for Isabella and her children, who had been sleeping, to get out of the house, Cabillan said.

Roberto tried to enter the room via the backdoor but the door was also ablaze. Responding fire fighters later reported him front getting further inside and took him to an unspecified hospital for burns in both arms.

Two other members of the household, Antonio and Remedios Gardeneza, both 70, the children's grandparents who had been staying with the Hernandezes, escaped unhurt, said SFO3 Alejandro Bunar of the Novaliches Fire District which conducted a parallel investigation.

Smoldering the second alarm, the fire likely resulted from the short-circuiting of electrical outlets in the living room, said Cabillan.

A TV set and cellular phone charger had been plugged to the outlet when the fire occurred, he added.

The fire was put out at 3:36 a.m. No estimate of damages incurred was immediately available.

In Tondo, Manila, at least 460 families lost their homes in a fire that ravaged a depressed community the other night.

SFO2 Gondencio Magallanes of the Manila Fire Department said the fire began at around 8:46 p.m. at the house of Antonio and Luz Solayao in Parok 2, Isla Pacing Sitio at Pier 2, North Harbor.

The fire soon reached Task Force Bravo and destroyed around 500 shanties, Magallanes said.

Resident Freddie Acosta, 22, narrowed his right foot and was immediately taken to the hospital for treatment.

Acosta lived quiters are still determining the cause of the fire which was put out at 10:37 p.m.

A MAN looks on at the remains of the house at 1535 Joshua St., Justice Plains Subdivision in Novaliches after a fire broke out in the living room early yesterday morning. Five people, four of them children, were killed in the incident.

NGO helps 'tarpaulin cases' start life afresh

from page A15

MetroBriefs

Tow truck worker shot dead

A TOWING operator was gunned down by two unidentified assailants before midnight Saturday in Cavite City, Jonnah Magdalena, 36, of Phase II-D Village 13, Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, died instantly after getting shot several times in the head and trunk, police said. Investigation showed that Magdalena was on board a towing truck with six other co-workers at about 10:30 p.m. when they discovered silver car on the roadside in Barangay Alapan I, Barangay Bagong Pulo, Kawit. Since the towed white car (unknown model and plate number) was ours, Magdalena and his co-workers asked the owner standing beside the car if they needed help, said case investigator PO2 Rodolfo Zubiaga. Without answer, one of the men suddenly pulled out a handgun and shot Magdalena repeatedly, Zubiaga said. The suspects, who escaped on board their car and sped away, police said. Magdalena's body was brought to the Philippine National Police crime laboratory for autopsy. The motive for the killing is still unknown. BJ Tiu

Atienza man to be charged today

CRAFTED is still to file today against ex-assistant of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza who was accused of kidnapping a prostitute since Wednesday night in Tondo.

"Based on my official findings, it's murder because of the element of treachery," said Chief Insp. Alejandro Yumang Jr., chief of the Manila Police District homicide division. Apart from murder, suspect Bok Bagay will also be charged with two counts of attempted homicide and illegal discharge of firearm, Yumang said, adding that the case will be filed before the Department of Justice. "We're filing it in the DOJ, Kasi dito, first filing in the inquiring on Monday," he said in a text message sent to the Inquirer. Bagay, son of Atienza's special assistant, was tagged by witnesses as the one who shot dead Ariel Lady, 37, of Gozo Street, Tondo, near nearby traffic disagreement. Bagay, who remains under the custody of the MPD, voluntarily surrendered to the MPD director Gen. Oscar Calderon. Pedro Bulaong and Jofay Magno

Donations sought for Malabon victims

THE PHILIPPINE National Red Cross is asking for donations for some 1,600 families affected by the fire that razed Barangay Tonsuya, Tonsuya, Malabon on July 10. The PNRC, through its chair Richard J. Gordon, has already distributed in some of the families relief goods. Estifino B. Mistl of the PNRC Caloocan chapter also mobilized their volunteers to provide medical aid to the victims. Those who want to help can visit the PNRC national office on Bonifacio Drive, Port Area, Manila or call 527-0000 and 527-8384.

Did you know

THE PHILIPPINE Normal University (originally called the Philippine Normal School) was created by Americans in January 1901 through Act No. 74 of the Philippine Commission. Required formerly a deposition of that year as an institution for training teachers. Through the years, it has expanded by establishing branches in four provinces (Aguinaldo Sur, Isabela, Negros Occidental and Quezon). It was also designated as a Center of Excellence in Geography, History and Values Education. Because of this, the PNU developed Filipino and Filipino textbooks, and teachers' manuals for use in public elementary and secondary schools nationwide. (pnu) - Rosalinda L. Pili-Bunuan

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No. 006-06
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Approved Budget for the Contract: Php 3,500,175.00
Source of Funding: PROJECT EQUITY BY KOMMO NATION
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Delivery Period: 90 CALENDAR DAYS
The Philippine Construction Industry Authority (PCIA) Category: Small B
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YOUNG girls staying in the safehouse undergo counseling as well as training on livelihood skills to prepare them for reintegration into society.

trafficking.

The US State Department's 2006 Trafficking in Persons report also noted that the Department of Justice had acquitted a number of prosecutors handling trafficking cases at the national level and had even assigned additional personnel to the provinces.

The VFF said many children and women still fall victim to human smugglers because of poverty, the scarcity of job opportunities, lack of education and the never-ending war in Mindanao.

Those were the reasons given by 15 young girls, who now stay in the safehouse, after they were rescued from human traffickers.

Victims tell their story

Kathy, a 16-year-old girl from General Santos City, said a handful of strangers who visited them only this month that she was lured to work as a waitress in Manila. While in transit, she was notified by her recruiter that she would be working as a guest relations officer in some girly bar.

"I was lucky than people from the VFF were already keeping a watch at the port of Morong," she said.

Another girl, 16-year-old Helen from Davao Sur, was lured by a woman who came to their neighborhood, offering her a job as a garment boardwalk in Manila for P1,700 a month.

"I took that opportunity because I want to help my mother," she told reporters.

Her mother worked in the fields while her father was nursing a wounder sustained in the national police station.

Abusive employer

Everything went well for her until the day she and her employer's son were left alone in the house.

"He made me take off my clothes and took pictures of me on his cell phone," she willed, adding that there was also a time when the son invited over his cousins and friends. "They forced me to do things that I didn't want to do," she said.

Helen managed and sought help from a barangay official, only to be sent back to her employer who beat her up for trying to escape. She had to be rushed to the hospital later for her injuries.

The VFF took her to the safehouse after her hospital information from abuse her case.

"She is our bravest girl here. She is among the few victims who pursued a case against her employer," Orbanda told the reporters.

Slow justice system

However, the slow justice system in the country has been one of the hurdles the organization faces in its battle against human trafficking. "The government should establish special courts to fast track these cases," she said.

One of the thousands of children the organization rescued, only 20 of them went on to file a case in court. Only two of them have been given justice so far.

"As long as these people are not put in jail, children, young girls will continue to be victimized by human smugglers," Orbanda stressed.

LGUs should cooperate

What the organization needs now, she pointed out, is the cooperation of local government units.

She suggested that LGUs come into the initiative to pass ordinances to help police and officials to check all dubious vehicles plying their roads, especially those that are covered with tarpaulin.

The young girls at the safehouse may have to wait for several years in their search for justice. But the organizers are aware that their ultimate wants are be provided.

"Apart from counseling, we provide them with informal and vocational training because we want them to invest in new skills when they are here," Orbanda explained. The girls undergo training in cosmetology, bag making, dressmaking and jewelry-making.

IT training

Meanwhile, Microsoft Philippines has tied up with the VFF to provide information and technology skills training to victims and vulnerable targets of human trafficking under the program Step Forward: Training and Exploitation of Women through Unlimited Potential (step-UP).

"Through step-UP, we are taking a stand to help eradicate human trafficking and exploitation in the Philippines," Antonio Jacobo, managing director of Microsoft Philippines, said.

The five-year project would be carried out in three of the organization's centers—in Manila, Batangas City and Davao City—considered among the trafficking "hot spots" in the country.

With the booming technology industry, Orbanda said, the children would have a better chance of getting suitable jobs once they are reintegrated into society.

"No matter how dreadful these children's experiences are, they need not take desperate measures. We want to show them that there are other ways to cope," she said.

QC riot police all set for anti-Sona rallies

By Margaux C. Ortiz

UNRULY RALLIES DURING President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (Sona) are unwelcome.

Mayor Sonny Belmonte of Quezon City Police District (QCPD), who will be in charge of keeping anti-Sona protesters under control, suggested Dr. National Capital Region Police Office's (NCRPO) civil disturbance management component, to hold a dialogue with protesters in Kalai Park, Manila yesterday morning.

Representatives from the Interim Police District's civil disturbance management (CDM) unit came to a dialogue with the anti-Northern Police District team and end up in third place, according to NCRPO Director Vidal Querol.

He added that the NCRPO holds CDM competitions twice a year. Once in April to prepare for the Holy Week rallies and another in July for the Sona demonstrations.

"This would enable our policemen to preserve their skills in crowd management and control, and update their knowledge on human rights," Querol said in a phone interview.

The NCRPO chief said QCPD emerged as the champion because its members were able to present solutions to problems arising scenarios.

"They were quick to move and recognized their own faces, brought down formation intact at all times," Querol said of the QCPD team.

The NCRPO chief emphasized the importance of keeping the formation which, adding that members of the policemen being caught in other directions were captured by mock protesters.

Querol also said that their newly painted anti-riot equipment earned big points for the QCPD team.

The Manila Police District (MPD), which topped the competition last April, placed fourth.

Elite cop unit pulling out

By Tarra Y. Quismundo

MEMBERS OF AN ELITE POLICE unit would soon be pulled out from the country's thousand centers to augment government forces tasked to battle insurgents.

Some 100 members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) deployed in Makati City would be pulled out anytime this month for their new assignment, Superintendent Eduardo Matillano, Makati City Police District Director Vidal Querol said.

"They would be leaving because the SAF is now recruiting, setting in light of the previous announcement that the PNP would be joining the sports in [anti-] insurgency," said Querol.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had earlier announced that the government would engage in an all-out war against insurgency and allocated a P1-billion fund for the undertaking. Besides the military, the PNP was also tapped to help in the counter-insurgency campaign.

The PNP-SAF members were first deployed in Makati in September 2005 as the police's response to a bank robbery staged in the heart of the business district a month earlier.

"They [police] told me that they are not closing that much in Makati. I will talk with security managers in Ayala (Makati's prime commercial district) to see if there would be additional security requirements as soon as we pull out the SAF," Querol told the reporters.

He added that he would look into the possibility of having other policemen fill the void. "If there would be a problem, we'll ask the assistance of the [Metropolitan] Manila Police," he said.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, meanwhile, said the presence of SAF operatives has been a vital deterrent to crime and terrorism.

"The PNP would not be good but the city because their presence here helps avert crime incidences," he said.

India puts off peace talks with Pakistan after blasts

NEW DELHI—INDIA AND PAKISTAN put peace talks with Pakistan due this week after suspects for carrying out the Bombay rights known as Mumbai's mass bombings left six terror militants based in that country, a top Indian foreign ministry official said on Sunday.

The decision came two days after a series of bomb blasts in commuter trains in the country's financial and entertainment hub killed 181 people and injured nearly 900.

Although there has been no breakthrough yet in investigations into one of India's worst terror attacks, officials suspect Pakistan-based Islamic militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Pakistani military spy agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, to be behind the bombings.

"We told them the environment is not conducive," said the Indian foreign ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

He was referring to talks due to be held in New Delhi on July 20-21.

There was no immediate reaction from Pakistan.

Before the blasts, Islamabad confirmed its participation. Islamabad has said it offer talks between the nuclear-armed neighbors "must be continued and carried forward."

Security forces have teased up to 70 calls made from Bombay to Pakistan, the Gulf and Bangladesh immediately before and after the attacks. On Daily News and Analysis (DNA) news paper reported Saturday.

The blasts were the worst terror attacks by India since 1993 when 257 people died in a string of bomb attacks blamed on underworld figures and Islamic militants.

The meeting between their chief foreign secretary officials was to have reviewed progress in the peace process, launched in early 2004 after the nuclear-armed rivals were to the brink of a fourth war in 2002.

"Our decision to put off the talks, however, did not mean that the peace process had been called off," the official said.

"We are still committed to making peace with them. But they have to show that they can keep their promises to end terrorism before we can move forward," he said.

The official was referring to a pledge by Islamabad made in 2004 that it would not allow its territory to be used to cause Indian militants fighting against New Delhi's rule in the disputed Muslim-majority region of Kashmir.

Pakistan has denied any connection with the Bombay bombings and said Indian charges against its military spy agency were nothing more than propaganda or speculation aimed New Delhi came up with evidence.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has offered Islamabad's full cooperation into any investigation by India, whatever it should lead.

250 rounded up

Indian police meanwhile rounded up 250 people Saturday as part of a huge intelligence trawl but wanted no suspects for the Bombay train attacks.

Senior officers said "many hundreds" had been picked up since Tuesday's rush-hour blasts with some released after questioning amid growing pressure on police to make arrests over the case.

The latest sweep was centered on an area populated by illegal Bangladeshi immigrants but only 11 were held for further questioning, police told reporters.

One Bombay railway station was closed Saturday after an anonymous caller warned a bomb had been planted but police found it a hoax after a search.

The savage but prearranged Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh express leaders of the Group of Eight nations for greater cooperation in fighting terrorism in South Asia. Singh warns leaders at the G8 summit in St. Petersburg on Monday.

Bombay-based activists from the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) are also suspected of having a role in the attacks but Hindu-Lashkar-e-Taiba and Sikh have denied any part in the blasts.

Three men have been the focus of media speculation including one accused of involvement in bomb-rings in New Delhi last year that left over 60 dead and two others who fled the country after an explosives seizure near Bombay in May.

But Bombay police commissioner A.N. Roy said the inquiry team was still sifting through large numbers of potential suspects for the attacks which injured 890.

"They are under the control. We're looking at many, many people," he said. He was unable to give exact numbers.

Seven blasts went off in 11 minutes along Bombay's western railway line, tearing open first-class train carriages packed with rush-hour commuters.

Two minutes elsewhere and religious community will be held next Tuesday at the blast sites at the exact moment when each bomb went off, an official said.

Reuters, AFP

BUSHES IN RUSSIA

US President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, arrive at the Peterhof for cocktails and dinner as guests of Russian President Vladimir Putin during the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, July 15. AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

Russia stumbles in bid to join WTO

ST PETERSBURG, Russia — President Bush said President Vladimir V. Putin announced that they had talked to come to an agreement on Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization, and aides said the deal, which had been expected as early as this weekend, was not likely for months. At a news conference, Bush offered a slightly rosier picture in the annual summit meetings of the Group of 8 economic powers. Putin and Bush also differed over Iraq, the state of Russia's democracy and Israel's military campaign in Lebanon. Though there had been another assassination as well — agreeing on initiatives to combat nuclear terrorism and share civilian nuclear material and technology — overall the appearance high-lighted growing tensions between former Cold War rivals over policy on key global problems. WSJ

Indonesia records another bird flu death

JAKARTA — A 44-YEAR-OLD Indonesian has died of bird flu, the health ministry said Sunday. The man died on July 12 at a hospital in East Jakarta and tests by the health ministry found he had the deadly H5N1 virus, said health ministry official Joko Suyono. "The man had a history of contact with chickens," he told AFP. It confirmed by a laboratory approved by the World Health Organization (WHO), the man's death would bring the country's bird flu fatalities to 57, reported Vietnam. AFP

Coalition forces launch big attack in Afghan south

KABUL — US, British and Canadian troops launched a pre-dawn offensive against Taliban guerrillas in Afghanistan on Saturday, taking control of a southern district from militants and their drug-running allies. The attack was part of a big offensive foreign troops have launched in response to the most intense phase of violence by a resurgent Taliban across the south. The surge in violence comes as a Nato-spearheaded force prepares to take over in the south from a US-led coalition force at the end of the month. At least 13 Taliban were killed as the coalition troops moved into the Sangin district of the southern province of Helmand on Saturday. It's an offensive spearheaded by helicopter-lifted units and helicopter-borne troops, a Nato spokesman has said. Reuters

British soldier dies in Iraq

BASRA, Iraq — One British soldier was killed and another wounded during an operation to seize a suspected "terrorist" in Iraq's restive southern city of Basra early on Saturday, the British military said. British military spokesperson Maj. Charles Bainbridge said two British soldiers were wounded when they came under small arms fire. They were evacuated to hospital where one later died. Reuters

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The WORLD

Lilac Lorenzo B. Gueco

UN Council slaps sanctions on N. Korea

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL voted unanimously on Saturday for a resolution requiring nations to prevent North Korea from obtaining dangerous weapons and demanding Pyongyang halt its ballistic missile program.

North Korea immediately rejected the resolution.

Its UN Ambassador Pak Gil Yon told the council that Pyongyang's missile development preserved a balance of forces in Northeast Asia and test launches would continue.

"It is clear to everyone that there is crossed by the DPRK is unfounded and just set forth the missile launches under such a situation," Pak told the council following the vote, using the acronym for his country's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The resolution requires all UN member states "in accordance with their national legal authorities" to prevent imports and exports of any material or funds relating to the exclusive Communist nation's missile programs or weapons of mass destruction.

It demands North Korea "suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program," and re-establish a moratorium on the launching of missiles.

The 15-member Security Council had wrangled for US days over the response to North Korea's multiple missile launches on July 5. One of those included a long-range Taepodong-2 missile, which could theoretically hit the continental United States but fell into the Sea of Japan.

The Security Council was divided until hours before the vote over inclusion of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which allows for military force if another specific sanction is adopted.

China had threatened to veto the measure if Chapter 7 were mentioned, swelling the US-led invasion of Iraq that did not receive specific council authorization.

Consequently, Japan, the United States, Britain and France had no choice but to drop the phrase. But they still considered the language of the resolution tough and binding.

Whether Pyongyang sees it that way is another story.

North Korea could respond with another missile launch or possibly even conduct a nuclear test to show the world it is undeterred and undaunted, said Park Hak-soon who heads North Korea studies at the Sejong Institute, a national security think tank near Seoul.

North Korea has enough nuclear material to make as many as 13 atomic bombs, according to one recent study.

"But it is unlikely that the North will make a move rashly or recklessly," Park told Reuters in Seoul. "Despite being psychologically concerned and on the defensive, Pyongyang probably sees the resolution largely as a political, diplomatic move—something (US President George W.) Bush and Japan joined hands to accomplish, but does not bear much substance. Its effectiveness has not been tested before."

Reuters

Bush, US Senate headed for stem cell showdown

WASHINGTON—BEFORE SEPT. 11 changed everything, President Bush wrestled publicly with the issue of embryonic stem cell research, then opened the door to federal financing for the science in the first major decision of his nascent administration.

Now, five years later, the stem cell debate is about to throw Bush into a decision that could lead to another first for him: a legislative veto.

On Monday, the Senate will take up a measure approved by the House that would loosen the carefully calibrated research restrictions that Bush outlined on Aug. 9, 2001, in his first prime-time televised address to the nation. If the bill passes, as expected, Bush says he will veto it, making good on a promise he made five days after that televised speech from his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Bush's chief political adviser, Karl Rove, reiterated the veto threat last week. That keeps Bush in good stead with the religious conservatives who make up an important part of his base, but it adds with other leading Republicans, including Sen. Bill Frist, the majority leader, who is a heart-lung surgeon and has pushed to bring the measure to a vote.

The bill would expand Bush's policy by allowing the government to pay for studies on stem cell colonies, or lines, derived from embryos that are to-old storage at fertility clinics and scheduled for destruction. The current policy allows financing only on lines created before Aug. 9, 2001. Bush has said, on at least to encourage further destruction of embryos.

Polls show that a majority of Americans support the research, and many celebrity figures prominently in several key races, among them Michael J. Fox in Bush's reelection state, New Jersey, Jim Talent, R-Mo., who opposes a state ballot initiative to protect the research and plans to vote against the Senate bill.

Nancy Reagan became an advocate for the research edible cause after her husband, the late former President Ronald Reagan, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. The former first lady called undecided senators last week to urge them to vote for the bill. While supporters say they have the 60 votes needed for approval, they are trying to secure 67, the number necessary to override a veto.

Whether they will succeed is unclear.

AFP

FIRST BATTERY-POWERED PLANE A manned aircraft powered by Panasonic's "Oyuzuki" lanthanum-ion Oleogane-Bryant in Saitama, Japan, July 14. Panasonic successfully in its world's first manned flight powered by Li-ion cell batteries. The plane soared 5.1 meters above ground, stayed on the air for 19 seconds and covered a distance of 39.1 meters.

AFP

Despite high fuel costs, US keeps on trucking

NEW YORK—SOARING FUEL costs have so far failed to dampen US enthusiasm for hitting the road in summer.

In fact, gasoline demand soared an all-time high around the weekend ahead of the July 4th Independence Day holiday, according to official data.

Analysts say US families have been able to afford to the higher fuel costs without making changes to their lifestyles.

"The consumer economy's demand for gasoline is inventible," said Jason Schenker, Prescient Securities, who noted only modest changes in auto preferences at US motorists.

"Even traditional mammoth sport utility vehicle (SUV) sales are beating but even even utility vehicle (not-based SUV) sales are strong. Essentially Americans have made their choice: big vehicles with big gasoline bills."

Department of Energy data showed US gasoline demand for the week to July 7 rose 0.4221 million barrels per day, the second highest on record.

US driving habits have been little changed even though pump prices have risen nearly 30 percent from a year ago. The American Automobile Association said average gasoline prices have risen to $2.960 per gallon (3.76 liters), near the all-time high after Hurricane Katrina struck on Aug. 29 last year.

Analysts say that part of the reason the United States has adjusted to high prices is that economic growth is strong as well.

"Despite higher prices for oil, the bulk of Americans and the world for that matter seems to be adjusting to higher prices," said Phil Flynn, a dealer at Alaron Trading.

AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

Sy drops back to 3rd as Winslow prevails/A31

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendrez

Europe gets back at Asia in MVP Cup

By Maong R. Cariño

A DOUBLE WHAMMY

Ronnie and Ronnie's Assassins left short in a classic eponymy: ouch, a tall mixed Danish pair, and the worst team that the Filipino crowd embraced as the ones went down to defeat as Europe last night ruled the MVP Cup: Sisters, Europe 3.

The feminine fought hard but still wound up with the short end of the stick. Sweetgyne Theresa Lindmann and Mariella Rytter (old, 24-22, 17-21, 18-21, Indoor Ace Jo's 23-21, 18-21, 21-11 memory of Hung Ming swapped to spoil to Europe.

That's surprise dominance of the world's top-ranked player in the ladies' singles except that the two continents have now split the first two editions of this rich, Ayala Cup-style event. EUROPE, A28

'Tough' Suico loses world title bid via 9th-round TKO

REFEREE Joe Cortez jumps in the face of a helpless Bulos (right). —AP

LAS VEGAS—FILIPINO CHALLENGER RANDY Suico's hopes of becoming a world champion were dashed Saturday (Sunday in Manila), losing via a ninth-round technical knockout to WBA lightweight champ Juan Diaz at The MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

The Cebuano's unanimous power was no match to Diaz's superior technical skills as the methodical Mexican American defended well and used a pitching job to befuddle Suico.

Referee Joe Cortez stopped the fight in 2:06 of the ninth round, after Suico's corner threw "Baby Bull's" countless scrubbies into the ring.

Diaz (30-0, 15 KOs), making his fifth title defense on the undercard of Manny Pacquiao's rematch with Fernando Vargas, moved adeptly and disembarrel patient punishment in just his third fight since Antonio's 2005.

The Texas native had a nine-month layoff caused by injuries and business problems before his unanimous victory over Jose Miguel Cotto in April.

'He was very strong'

"Suico was very tough," Diaz said. "We came to take my title, and he was very strong. He came out pounding from the opening bell."

Suico (26-1) threw fully punches but connected with just 15 percent, while Diaz landed 66 percent of his blows.

Suico absorbed plenty of punishment, but Diaz's lack of devastating punching power allowed the Filipino fighter to hang around for most of nine rounds (See Bulos Eye below).

Suico was knocked out for the first time in his career, showing even less power than Diaz. He was a late replacement on the card for Lakva Sim, who was banned by Cotto on July 2004 to injuries. Suico's boxing career dated 1976.

The 26-year old Suico, who was never in real trouble up to the stoppage, got a warning from Cortez in the 10th round for not recovering his punch output.

The Filipino's trainer, Jeanne Abbess, and manager, Joe Kuntana, assured Cortez that they stood was fine, and that Suico would continue fighting. —With reports from AP and Isidro L. Ligambebay, contributor

Europe gets back at Asia in MVP Cup

From page A19

And more than the win, the rally said to the west came as a surprise. So less of the experts gave Europe a chance owing to the Asians' firepower on paper.

The Americans' debut and Yao's unavailability for LEGENDS. Ramesh Asians's unanimous beating, but the Chinese are still encountered a rough time against a foe he has beaten so many times in the past.

And if it was any consolation for the Yao-owned Bat cousin in the Asiatics Collegians, Liu and Asmaneus grabbed one third (more to a tie) filled with double.

Liu, ranked world No. 2, drew barrier-reviews shots, finished with a double-more authority and played like he was completely at home in doing so a 21-13, 14-21, 21-14 win over the tough-as-nails Asmaneus.

Still, the Liu victory that centered a standing ovation from the crowd packed and more than those hailing the showdown, 10-8.

The win was worth $60,000 (about P3.15 million) for the Taiwanese squad, with Asia settling for the $30,000 runner-up purse.

The Americans picked up the second slot a brisky showing that they are only world-class talents by bombarding a game that had their conquerors saying nothing but praise after the match.

"It was not easy for us," Spitzer told said. "We knew that they would play well in their home court and we got our own during the game.

"We played in a terrific atmosphere out there, it was much cooler in Greenwood."

Tracy Lamaneusa played really well, possibly today," Lapkovas added. "He got valuable tips from Coal Hamric, half of the team that also assisted in three-sets over the Asians' Game (see quote).

"And she told us that your players were getting to play fantastic today."

Kennie and Kennedy rallied from a 1-14 deficit to win the first set, now dominating save and engaging the Danes to several long rallies.

The Filipino pair also saved some set points, where Kennie smashed a winner that Lapkovas didn't even make done to retrieving. The siblings, ranked 21st in the globe, then won four of the last five points to close out the set to 17-21.

Europe started dominating the event from the second day on, with Asmaneus getting the better of reigning world and Olympic champion Taufik Hidayat of Indonesia, 21-17, 17-21, 21-12.

Gail Emms and Imra Aelbrig then came out and save the Europeans. Strengthening Lapkovas Chandrawinata, tandem in Atlanta, 21-8, 21-15, a victory that gathered so much momentum for the European it rallied all the way to the final day yesterday.

Asia had jumped to a 3-0 lead by winning all three matches on opening day and would overpower experience of the Cup to be decided only in the final match with Zhang dazzled to prevail over Yao.

"I had very, very good in defeating Zhang," the world's seventh ranked Yao, who left his partner Chen Jin to 1999 to live in the Netherlands, said through an interpreter.

Yao's victory also averaged a first-day loss to Zhang, who actually won the final four points in the second set last night to force a decider set.

But Yao opened up with a 9-2 lead in the third and Zhang's points only came in trickles. The former member of the Chinese national team then cornered up the heavy score, finishing it with a winning score of the spent nine points for a 15-7 lead.

The event was presented by Smart Communications and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and sponsored by ING, SBC, Sanyo, Mikasa, Schick of Indonesia, 21-17, 17-21, 11-21.

Gail Emms and Imra Aelbrig then came out and save the Europeans. Strengthening Lapkovas Chandrawinata, tandem in Atlanta, 21-8, 21-15, a victory that gathered so much momentum for the Europeans

FORMER champion Pepsi Macaraeg (in yellow) confronts Cuala Pena after both Filipinos spun out in the second lap.

Sy drops back to 3rd as Winslow prevails

SUBIC BAY — BRITON JAMES WINslow raced to victory in Round 8 of the Asian Formula Three Series here Sunday over ace Malaysian Ali Jackson to regain a major overhaul in the standings that left the Philippines' erstwhile leader Tyson Sy slipping to third overall and with a lot of catching up to do.

By coming off a fifth place finish in Round 7 on Saturday, last-seeded crying to overtake Indonesian Marino Sampurgo on a tight corner in the 9th lap, Rob failed to pick up precious points going into Round 8 here Sunday.

For the second straight day, Dado Mohamed Team Goddard failed to finish after touching cars with fellow Filipino Pepsi Macaraeg in the second of the 12-lap race.

Jackson's bid for a third straight win was disrupted by Winslow who seized the second lap, but the 17-year-old Jackson of Team Racing took matters up here on fourth. 15 points and moved ahead in the drivers' championship with 107.

Dillon Bertanyi, Winslow's Fujitsu Racing with Threebond JA Motorsport teammate, finished fourth behind Singaporean Asan Racing and picked up 10 points, good enough to propel him to second overall from third at 98, three points ahead of Sy.

With his first win of the season, Winslow, driving a car with a new chassis, earned 20 points and improved to 92, still in fourth but on target to overtake by mid-tentative. Winslow will start on the front grid in Round 9.

Marino earned 12 points for his third place finish and improved to 52, in a tie for fifth place with Neha, who will start the next race at the back of the grid.

"I started from second on the grid but I really made a good start, got past Ali and just kept my position," said Winslow.

"It's my to win as many races as I could and get extra points."

After losing the lead to Winslow, Jackson opted to stay back and keep Marino in check at the rear of the way easier that a second place finish would be enough to catapult him to the overall lead.

Jackson already has three wins to the skin-year, counting his breakthrough victory in Round 5 here last month.

BRITAIN'S James Winslow speeds to a handsome victory in Round 8.

ASIAN F3 SERIES
Round 8

1. J. Winslow	England	19:01.512
2. A. Jackson	Ireland	19:01.638
3. D. Bertanyi	Indonesia	19:02.134
4. D. Baldwin	England	19:40.866
5. R. Hermawan	Indonesia	20:01.093

At 17 laps each race, but the overall lead has seen his exclusive dropper continuing problems with his Dallara 304, rebuilt after a crash with teammate Gu by Ada Mercado in Round 5.

"There are still some problems with the car, especially in handling," he said. "I've drawn by 12 points but I'll be back for after race."

Neha kept himself water after his initial retirement but Marino, the overall champion in 2003 driving for Shell Helix Electric POSO, explained the incident that both took them out.

"Dado hit me on the side and I spun, hitting him as a result," Marino said. "There was an argument as we got out of our cars but it's normal. The bad thing is we were both out of the race."

Indonesian Hermawan of HRW Team Indonesia drives F3 topped the Promotion class for cars with drastic built in 2000 and older while Dedi Herwed came in second.

Redemption for Buenavista

Tolentino unchallenged in Milo MM distaff race

By Jasmine W. Payo

PERSY EDUARDO "VENTER" BUENAVISTA ended the Metro Manila leg of the 30th National Milo Marathon yesterday, he didn't just leave behind a pack of a thousand or so runners.

The diminutive runner had also put behind him the most painful episode of his running career.

"I'm continuing with my plan to train in marathon," Buenavista said in Filipino, minutes after topping the 42K race in two hours, 33 minutes and 18 seconds.

Buenavista, who boasts several national records by oval races, has just opened a new chapter in his career after his infamous disqualification during the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

The 27-year-old was stripped of the gold after judges ruled he obstructed Thai runner Suwannaong Srisang in the final dash to the finish of the 5,000 meter race last December in Manila.

"Medyo masakit pa rin (It still hurts a bit)," said Buenavista. "But I have been preparing for the marathon, just because I qualify in the Asian Games."

Although he already bagged the grand final and set the course record 2:22:21 in the 2005 Milo Marathon, Buenavista has second more crown in the 10,000-and 5,000-meter.

But yesterday he displayed impressive form as he crossed the finish line at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila almost a full minute ahead of runnerup Manuelo Gaspar (2:34:08).

"Gaspar ay a fast pacer," said Buenavista, who stands barely five feet. "I stay with jogging at the start."

But running his own race turned out to be a good decision for Buenavista: "I was jogging behind by five minutes. I was running eighth in the first 10 kilometers, then I started catching up."

By the time the leaders reached Manolo, Malate City Buenavista overtook Gaspar and third runner-up Reynaldo delos Reyes (2:40:19).

In the women's division, 19-year-old Allyn Tolentino easily captured the crown with a time of 3:12:26.

Tolentino, a Criminology student at La Salle Dasmariñas, finished nearly 40 minutes ahead of runner-up Geraldine Ibañez (3:52:30). Daisy Casillan, 41, finished third in 3:52:41.

The winners earned slots in the grand final of the nationwide series on Dec. 16. All male participants who logged in less than four hours and female runners who finished within four and a half hours also qualified.

Buenavista, whose second here was broken by Geronimo Salud (2:33:20) last year, pocketed P50,000 while Gaspar and Delos Reyes won P20,000 and P10,000 respectively.

The country's undisputed 10K queen Silverdalia Ilanguit returned her crown with a time of 35:39. Ramon Gallina ended the men's race in 30:07.

BUENAVISTA: New boss

TOLENTINO: Easy does it.

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SPORTS

Sweet repeat

Sugar Shane wins rematch vs Vargas

SHANE Mosley raises his victory mark convincing this time, sending Fernando Vargas on his back in the ninth round. AP

LAS VEGAS—EVEN WITH two good eyes, Fernando Vargas never saw Sugar Shane Mosley's perfect left hook.

Mosley stopped Vargas in the ninth round of their 139-pound rematch Saturday night, flattening Vargas with a walloping left hand for his second victory in the rivalry in five months.

A grotesque swelling that closed Vargas' left eye caused the fighters' first match to be stopped in the 11th round in February. But Sugar Shane had a plan that Vargas simply couldn't see in the rematch—and it ended with a punch that caught Vargas completely by surprise.

"When I was in the ring, I remembered watching Oscar [De La Hoya] fight Vargas, and he threw that perfect left hook," Mosley said, referring to the Golden Boy's 11th-round TKO of Vargas four years ago. "I was becoming greatest, and I saw the opportunity, and I threw the perfect left hook again."

The charismatic four-time world champion is back on form after four losses from 2000-04, and he might get a matchup with Floyd Mayweather Jr. or Oscar De La Hoya next year if Mosley drops to 147 pounds.

Mosley was more aggressive and sharp from the opening bell, patiently landing the right hand that hurt Vargas repeatedly in their first fight. Vargas seemed hesitant and disorganized, never entering a clear rhythm.

Mosley opened a cut above Vargas' right eye in the fifth round, but neither fighter had done much to the ninth until Vargas failed to block that crushing left hook. Mosley kept backing Vargas' knees and sending him to the canvas.

"I thought I was doing well up until the left hook," said Vargas, who never even saw the punch until he watched the replay. "I thought it was slowly going my way."

Mosley climbed the ropes subtly Vargas twice struggled to get up. But fight announcer Jim Watt declared Mosley's defeated himself from Mosley's final blows before referee Kenny Bayless stopped the fight with 22 seconds left in the round.

Vargas stressed weight as the issue, perhaps suffering from his weight fluctuations before the fight. He made weight on Friday then apparently gained close to 14 pounds of hydration before the fight—which might have slowed him down. AP

HOW MANY WAYS DOES A BALD MAN SUFFER?
BEFORE
Why suffer at all, NOW you can have the permanent solution
- HAIR TRANSPLANTS -
AFTER
A. PINEDA MEDICAL CLINICS

Landis rolls dice as cyclists brace for crucial stages

MONTGELIARD, FRANCE—FLOYD Landis is willing to gamble that his lows days at the Tour de France are ahead of him.

The American gave up the race's overall lead on Saturday deciding to save his energy for next week's vital stages before the Tour reaches its finish in Paris next Sunday.

Spain's Oscar Pereiro, of Illes Balears, claimed the jersey by finishing 29 minutes, 57 seconds ahead of Landis and the main pack of riders in Saturday's 15th stage. Jens Voigt of Germany won the stage, finishing in the same time as Pereiro.

"I don't think we need to keep the jersey every single day, and I'm happy to see Pereiro get the jersey," said Landis, who was a teammate of Pereiro's on Phonak. "He's an extremely nice guy, and he looked happy."

Landis slipped to second overall, 1:36 behind the Spaniard. Pereiro underscored the logic of his fantasy teammate's strategy.

"I don't consider it a gift...but for those it's an advantage now to see someone else have to work to control the race," Pereiro said.

For years, the strategy of many Tour favorites has been to allow others to ride to temporarily take the jersey then overpower it in the time trial.

He still has gruelling mountain stages of the last week. The cards favored the pretenders on teams to protect their leader and ride hard at the front. It was often a ride of thrash for Lance Armstrong on route to his record-seven Tour victories.

Landis' teammate Oscar Freire Gomez said that letting Pereiro take the yellow jersey amounted to "a gamble"—but he insisted in his typical concentrate on supporting him in the days starting Tuesday after a rest day Monday. AP

TRIPLE CROWN

Mr. Victory lives up to his name

By Manong R. Castillo

A SARG-TRAINING TENTER WON THE third leg of the 2006 Triple Crown series.

But it was not overwhelming first choice Special Edition.

League shot Mr. Victory came charging from the tail-end of the pack yesterday and nipped Don Exequiel at the wire to take the Chairwoman's Cup in the final installment of this year's series which produced respective winners each time.

The three-year-old chestnut owned by Jake Madrinan benefited from an error made by Don Exequiel rider Antonio Alcantel and Fernando Raquel made the most out of the opening he saw for the colt's biggest career win.

His victory, whose original owners existed, Affrey Gomez, fell at the jump of the first leg won by Don Exequiel, clocked 2:11.4 (22", 23", 25", 25", 25") over a hard track at the Santa Ana Park in Manila.

It was worth a cool P1.2 million for his handlers.

William Dollar, under Jonathan B. Hernandez, again set the pace with Don Exequiel but on his heels until the field reached the backstretch.

Alcantel then urged on Don Exequiel on a run that was more than 4000 meters to go and looked ready to book a second leg win, still leading by a nose from lengths when the field rounded for home.

Sorry setback

But it looked like Alcantel, a veteran of many big runs, stopped coming Don Exequiel nose-ing the wire.

It was a sorry setback for the thirtish Bagtasos-trained Don Exequiel, the fourth finisher in the second leg won by Special Edition.

He settled for the P450,000 runner-up's prize.

William Dollar finished third worth P250,000, the first time in the series that the open-field landed in the money.

Special Edition, who skimmed a huge chunk of the winnings with the distance sailing her come-from-behind style well, clocked in a badly-beaten fourth worth P100,000.

Jet Swiss, Dixie The Stranger and Strong Silver wound up the finishing order.

The Mr. Victory win assured that no entry repeated in winning this year, proof of how wide open this series went.

TEAM McLAREN MERCEDES
CORPORATE PARTNER
KEEP WALKING
JOHNNIE WALKER

'Salpukan' Round 4 today

SIXTH EIGHT-BALL ON SIX-WHOOPIE CIRCUIT Rio "Salpukan Sa Singapur" 9-ball derby which debuts off at 11 a.m. today at the Makati Coliseum. The six-day (July 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 22) event open-cued by B-Mag Derby Ace is hosted by PCU Sports and Entertainment Corp. headed by promoters Jo Ortiñez, Rody Galut and William Co. A total 256 participants have signed to the event which offers a grand prize of P25 million. Action airs live on ABS-CBN on Sunday, for inquiries, call 896-5161 to 896-8833.

San Juan derby under way

SAN JUAN COLISEUM'S "RAMBLIN AND SLAMIN Limit" 9-ball derby today with 45 contenders lined up and Singapore Dollars 1000 on opener. Promoter Hanzie Lacuna of LBSA Sports said the elimination rounds will be held today and on Wednesday, Friday and Monday. Those with two points will compete on July 19. Non-LBSA members can join coming in with cash prize of P2.5 million. For inquiries, call 725-0685 / 726-6889 or 0917-808 5600.

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Manolo R. Bulgo

ENTERTAINMENT

Lito Zulueta G. Velarde

Puruntong family reunion

FOR MARICEL SORIANO (JUBILLY), THE first taping day of the ABS-CBN sitcom "John En Shirley" felt like a "family reunion."

"It had been a long time since we last worked together. It was reuniting," Maricel said of getting again with her foxy Jubilyn (as dad John Pacumalong) and Susan Roces (as Encarnacion a.k.a. Shirley's mother-in-law).

Jolphy and Susan starred in "Bakunguwa Iawa" in 1956. Susan and Maricel replilled "Super Inday" movies for Regal in the 1980s. Completing the "clan" are producer Kitchie Benedicto, Jolphy's real-life son Vandolph and director Bert de Leon...who composed the theme of the old kiddie show "Kalabasa Mamaw," which starred a pre-teen Maricel in the 1970s. More and more pictures in Tuesday's Living section.

Rapplet Gan Diego Jr.

THE LAST time Maricel and Susan acted together was in Regal films' "Super Inday."

A FAMILY AFFAIR: Dad Jolphy Marquez with the stars of real-life son Vandolph, who plays Rising Puruntong (above, left). Director Bert de Leon (standing, above, right) gives last-minute instructions to the entire cast on the first taping day of "John En Shirley."

PHOTOS BY ALEX MAGNO

How producers can apply for Film Fund subsidy

By Marinel R. Cruz

AN EIGHT-POINT guideline on how film producers can avail of a portion of the P20-million Film Fund was released last week by the Film Development Council of the Philippines, according to FDCP vice chair Chitodee Tuvera.

The new set of rules and regulations was drawn up by FDCP chair Rolando "Dondy" Siguion-Reyna. National artist for Film Eddie Romero, film producer Digna Santiago, and Tuvera.

Romero heads the Film Fund's selection committee and Santiago is chair of the monitoring committee. Tuvera is also chair of the Cinema Evaluation Board.

Gov't subsidy

The Film Fund is a government subsidy for local producers, according to Tuvera. It is intended to "stimulate economic activity in the industry and encourage production of quality Filipino films."

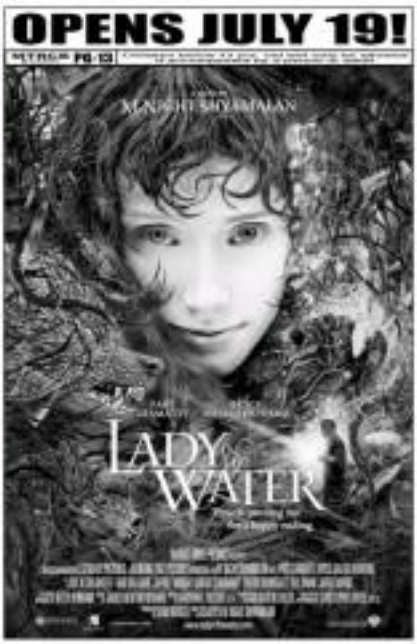
Tuvera said the new rules and regulations are meant to answer questions about producers' eligibility for subsidy, criteria for film projects, the application process and evaluation procedures, and film monitoring.

First three

The essential features of said joint ventures between FDCP and the film producers are, in order of the deals.

Tuvera said the second would answer the first three subsidy requirements by end of September.

The draft likewise discusses the FDCP's claim on a film, in



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6 LAKE HOUSE

7 PIRATE SOF THE CARRIBEAN 2

8 I WANNA BE HAPPY

9 LOVE WRECKED

10 SEE NO EVIL

ERMITA

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 BATAS MILITAR | SEE NO EVIL

3 I WANNA BE HAPPY

4 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

5 SUPERMAN RETURNS

6 LOVE WRECKED

7 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

METRO EAST

1 LOVE WRECKED

2 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

3 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

4 SUPERMAN RETURNS

5 SEE NO EVIL

6 BATAS MILITAR | PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

7 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

8 I WANNA BE HAPPY

NOVALICHES

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

3 I WANNA BE HAPPY

4 SUPERMAN RETURNS

5 INITIAL D

CITISQUARE MALABON

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

3 RESERVE

4 RESERVE

PIONEER

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

3 SUPERMAN RETURNS

4 LOVE WRECKED

SEE NO EVIL

STA. ROSA

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 SUPERMAN RETURNS

3 SEE NO EVIL

4 I WANNA BE HAPPY

LIPA

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 I WANNA BE HAPPY

3 LAKE HOUSE

4 SUPERMAN RETURNS

DASMARINAS

1 SUPERMAN RETURNS

2 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

3 BATAS MILITAR

4 I WANNA BE HAPPY

ANGELES

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 I WANNA BE HAPPY

3 BATAS MILITAR

4 SUPERMAN RETURNS

IMUS

1 SUPERMAN RETURNS

2 BATAS MILITAR

3 I WANNA BE HAPPY

4 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

STARMILLS

1 TAKE THE LEAD

2 BATAS MILITAR

3 I WANNA BE HAPPY

4 SUPERMAN RETURNS

5 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

6 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 3

BACOLOD

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 SUPERMAN RETURNS

3 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

4 THE FAST AME THE FURIOUS 3

5 LAKE HOUSE

6 SEE NO EVIL

ILOILO

1 PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN 2

2 THE HUN

3 SUPERMAN RETURNS

4 LAKE HOUSE

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July 29, 2006

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MANDY A. <illegible>

Why Cl
special

MIDDLE ENGINEERING do a joint
times more in Bangkok earlier
Megastar Sharon Cuneta sam
that made her "feel very proc
the 121 of Filipino singer
Bautista, proudly displayed
been selling albums, although
study had a copy of the CD, of
owned having members might dec

"I'm really happy about how
way has taken him... how he h
the hearts of Indonesians, h
and all my other dreams might
his music. He deserves it. An
young fans hope for (upon) my re
grace [in my shows]," says the
of Christian.

The two first sang together i
Asian concert last year, t
Josh Groban's "The Prayer"
Rated Mr Tjp," Sharon revea
again to be a special guest i
Mega Valentine" concert at t
Coliseum this year—and shou
the report, and for the first
provincial tour, in Lucena Ci
29, with venerable Batangueña
pa Filipino in Dark Field.

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SPONGEGIRA

Levi's free concert

Levi's marks the opening
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today, with a free rock concert
Minor Chords on July 29, from 6 p
To be featured in the concert
rock bands Slab, Bingo, Spon
Urbandub.

Booze Night contin

The Filipino blues communit
the rock-band playlist(s) on
Night: A Benefit Concert for

How pro

from page A2-1

the event that the producer f
all (c) 2006

In addition, the guideline
that the FICP fund clash—a
the rice chart and heads of the
and monitoring committees.
allow for answering questions
suspensions and applicatio
guidelines.

Only Filipinos

According to the desk, (t
available only to Filipino
The films should be shot ma
Philippines and at least 90 p
the cast and staff members sh
should be Filipinos.

To apply for the subsidy,
same cohort, among other
script, the proposed cast an
budget for the project—as sp
request for financial assistan

TITO MARVIS

FLINTSTONES and The Gang

hristian is Sharon's l guest—again

SHOW TIME

SHARON Cuneta and Christian Bautista

KICA Penalejo

STELLA Ruiz

CHRISTINE Dayrit

Tito Marvis concert

The "Tito Marvis ... Live in Manila" concert has been moved to Aug. 18, at Ritchel Tritz, Hotel Philippine (Nasa), CCP Complex.

The Puerto Rican salsa genie is flying in with his 30-piece band from Orlando, Florida.

Proceeds of the concert will go to the Tulay Foundation for street children.

Tonight

Listen to the soothing repertoire of acoustic trio **Silk & Steel** on July 17, 19 and 21 at **Mesh's Bar Bistro**, Greenhills 3, Wilson Corner, Makati City. For inquiries, call 757-4125 or 757-4721.

Tomorrow

On July 18 and 21, National Nutrition Council's **Search for Little Ms Nutrition** and **Jingle singing contest** will be held at **Riverbanks Mall**. Call 946-0000 ex 110 and 109 for information.

Retro band **Arriba & Sealed One Band** will perform on July 18 and 21 at **Mesh's Bar Bistro**. For inquiries, call 757-4721 or 757-4721.

July 20

India Sun, together with **The 8526 Band**, will have a show titled "Strong Enough" at **Mesh's Bar Bistro** on July 20 and 21. For inquiries, call Mesh's at 757-4721 or 757-4721.

July 21

Paradyse St Edgar will have a come back concert at the **Bagsac Grand Theater, Airport Casino Filipino**, at 9 p.m. For ticket inquiries please call Live Action Promotion Inc. 506.3841 and 506.8068, 42 Del Pilar cor. Delos Vil. 5555, Tel. cornel@491.9999 and the Jose Casino Filipino 851.7755.

Flintstones and the Gang will perform on July 21, 22 and 23 at **Mesh's Bar Bistro**. For inquiries, call 757-4721 or 757-4721.

July 22

Rita Penalejo will be having her "Beloved Sister" album mall tour at **Ever Gumaco Cubao**. The evening **Ito Kids** will be with the singer/actress during her visit.

Reighgold Productions will showcase their talents in a mall show dubbed "Hagan Healthy Me" at 5 p.m. at **Riverbanks Pandacan Kawayanan Street**.

oducers can apply . . .

profile of the producer desired.

There will be a 60-day period during which all applications will be reviewed by the selection committee.

The producers should start shooting within six weeks, at the latest, upon approval of the funding and should have entered a play date, which is within three months after the completion of post-production.

The monitoring committee has the option to visit the work in progress, according to the draft.

Release shed

Forty percent of the subsidy will be turned over to the producer when 67 percent of the film's principal photography has been completed and the edited rushes have been approved by the monitoring committee.

Another 40 percent will be released when the producer submits the final copy, and the remaining 20 percent upon the delivery and viewing of the film print.

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ENTERTAINMENT

RUSHES

Goofy moments at 'Idol' auditions

ALTHOUGH HE SOMETIMES BOOS contestants out of the auditions room mocking—or sobbing—"Philippine Idol" judge Francis Magalona has goofy moments, too.

During breaks, the singer-TV host walks and kids around, poses for pictures with fans and chats with the ABC-5 crew. Also takes jokes suggestions of the scenes around him—colorful characters, hyperactive contestants, humor in reactions—that he later uploads on his website, francismagalona.multiply.com.

Mike's fellow judges Pilita Corrales and Ryan Cayabyab kill time some other way. Refer to photos here.

DEFINE 'BREAK TIME.' Pilita reunites up, Mr. C gets in touch ...

EXCLUSIVE SCREENING
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GALLERIA and ERMITA
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NOW SHOWING
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Distributed by COLUMBIA PICTURES

KATRINA Halili, this year's 'sexiest.'

Victory party

That is one victory bash where the spectators were the biggest winners.

MBB Philippines threw the party for its 100 Sexiest Women in the World 2006 at the World Trade Center.

Guests were treated to an exciting hot performance of the mag's cover girls, plus live music by Kamikaze. Actress Katrina Halili was named sexiest of them all.

... and French M tones set of judge persona singathon

ROCK star Gene Simmons of the band Kiss, left, and partner of 11 years, former Playboy Playmate Shannon Tweed ... stars of the new A&E network reality series "Gene Simmons Family Jewels"—speak before a panel discussion at the Cable Television Critics Association press tour in Pasadena, California.

Fil-Arts like her

Fil-Am singer Arden recently released her album, "Soul Good Music." Arden says the center tingle, "Kimika," was inspired by her summer homecoming. "It is meant to encourage Filipinos everywhere, of every class, to embrace their culture and be proud of it."

Tita Parer's sister

Daniel Stern is the younger of two daughters of Daisy Romualdez and Manny Parer. Which makes her the sister of Tita Parer—remember her?—who's now based in Barcelona, Spain. Kimika is working on an album by this month and a debut concert in September. Her parents (she's starting on the right foot): Pedri Pimentel and Sam Milby.

Message of hope

LONDON—Australian pop singer Kylie Minogue gave a message of hope for cancer sufferers when she talked for the first time publicly about her ordeal with the disease in a television interview.

"It's like a bomb has dropped," the 38-year-old singer said of the experience, in an interview on Britain's Sky One channel. "I was just completely thrown into another world." Minogue—Australia's biggest pop star, having sold an estimated 40 million records worldwide—said she was far from fully recovered from breast cancer. /AFP

Heavenly date

EXTON — A date with TV actress Jessica Biel will be up for bid next week as babysitter-money for a teenager who lost her leg in a limousine accident on the night of a school dance, Internet newspaper reported this week.

The event dubbed "Bidbysitter" to help Molly Hannah family with medical expenses is scheduled for Tuesday at the Bark Island Club, organizers told The Denver Post and Rocky Mountain News. The hours described the date as a lunch date. It can make meanings pointed on the internet. Despite's "Greatest Romantic Movie" origin listeners to support the fund-raiser. "I intend to submit every special auction item as my contribution to the evening." /AP

JEPHERS

DAPHNE PARKER

KYLIE MINOGUE

JESSICA BIEL

ENTERTAINMENT

JED Madela

Famas rivals win bid to halt show

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THE AWARDS NIGHT OF THE COUNTRY'S oldest award-giving body—the Philippine Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (Famas)—set at the UP Theater in Diliman on July 15, was stopped by a Temporary Restraining Order, according to its presidente sir: Pedro.

Pedro told Inquirer Entertainment in a phone interview that the TRO was filed by Famas member Jimmy Tia, a politician and leader of a rival faction, and was granted by Judge Felisberto T. Ofilada Jr. of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 8 on July 13.

Pedro claimed that the feud with Tia resulted from the latter's defeat in the Famas election in 2004.

"The day I won, he resigned," Pedro said. Since then, he added, a series of court cases have been filed to take control of Famas, now in its 54th year.

Pedro provided reporters with documents showing that a previous TRO filed by Tia had been denied by Judge Antonio Eugenio Jr. of Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 24 on March 13, and that a July 11 court decision, also under Judge Eugenio, had recognized Tsai (Pedro) as Famas president.

Tia told Inquirer in a phone interview that his complaints stemmed from the fact that "Famas" registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission had been revoked in 2003."

Wait first

He pointed out: "We should first wait for the revocation to be lifted before handing out awards."

Angel Cabo, Pedro's associate and producer of this year's Famas show, argued, "Pedro is not using the name 'Famas, Inc.,' only 'Famas.' He pleaded to register Famas as our group's traditional property."

Pedro asserted that his goal was to restore Famas' credibility. "[Tia+added] by numerous scandals concerning bribery and vote-buying in the past." He added that Tia's action might ease the ire of the movie industry and hasten the demise of Famas.

Tia countered, "We are not trying to kill... we are trying to save Famas."

Pedro said he hoped to conclude the Famas chess as soon as the case is settled.

Jed to judge the int'l tilt that he won

By Nini Valera

SINGER JED MADELA WILL RETURN TO the World Championships of the Performing Arts (WCOPA) this year to be one of the judges in the competition.

Last year, Jed, a common artist of Universal Records, won the runaway champ in the competition, held in Hollywood, California. He won the gold in all the six categories that he joined.

Another Filipino, Rhea Navales, also won in several categories, but it was Jed who prevailed as Grand Champion of the World in the Singing Division.

Hall of fame

"I don't know yet to what category I would be judging," Jed told Inquirer Entertainment last week. "But [WCOPA] judges are rumored. I will find out only when I get there."

The contest will be held sometime in September.

Jed will also be inducted into the WCOPA Hall of Fame for making a sweep of all the 2005 major awards. Plus, he will officially open and close the competition.

"The experience of joining the competition is the main thing," said Jed. "This is what I would like to tell the local artists who are set to join this year. Just enjoy it, and pick up everything you can from the experience. If you don't win, don't be disheartened; you've already won in terms of experience."

More RP entries

Unlike last year when only Jed and Rhea were set to compete, a lot of artists have been tapped this year to represent the Philippines. Singers Joaquin, Faith Cuneta, Aryanna, Jonalyn Viray and even the more established Jay R are said to be joining, according to Jed.

"There may not be any cash prize at stake, said Jed, but the honor and prestige are "enough already."

Jed won a $10,000 scholarship to Juilliard. He said he would like to enrol in a course there in the future, but that he wasn't ready just now to leave his budding career.

"Winning the WCOPA has jump-started my career," he admitted. "But I'm still enjoying all the opportunities that a world championship has opened for me here [in the country]. I was already in the scene before I won, but I was just there. After winning, my career zoomed so have gone up a few notches. I don't think I could give that up now to go to Juilliard."

Booked solid

He revealed that his schedule was booked solid until next year.

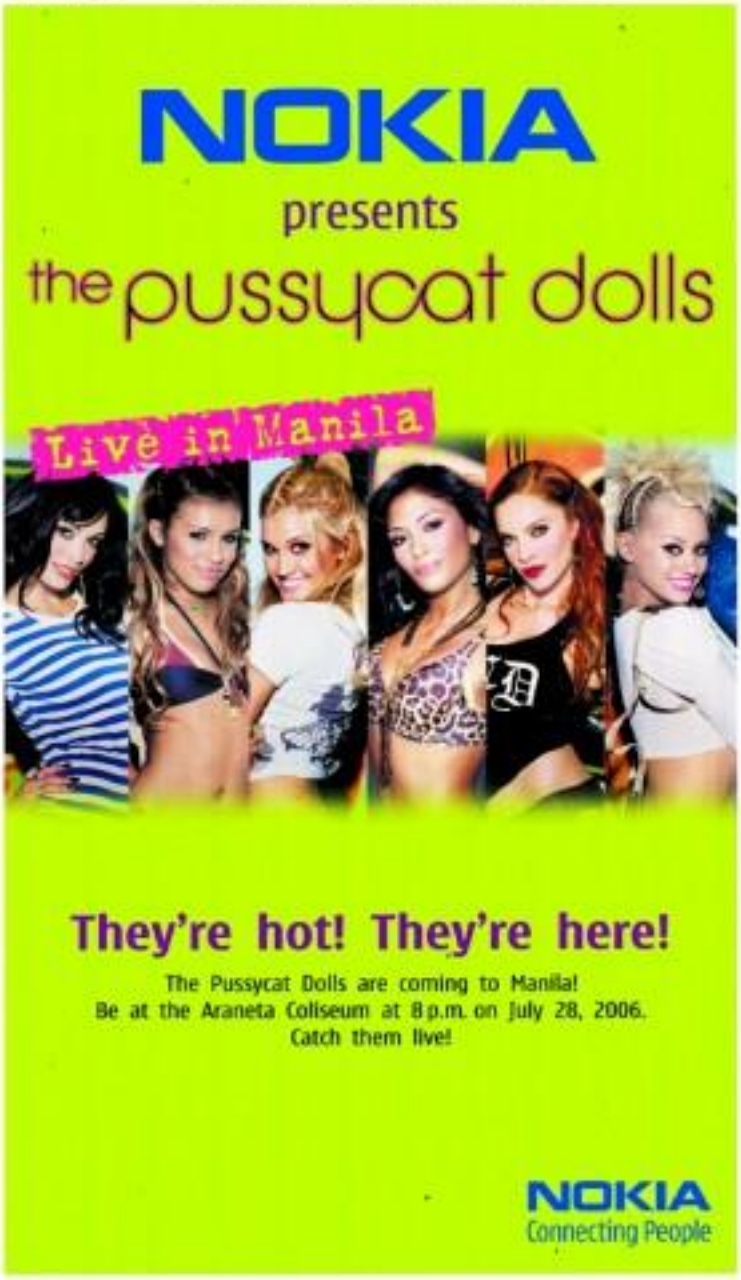
Last Thursday and Friday, Jed celebrated his birthday with a concert billed "The Grand Champion of the World in Concert," at Cinerape in Greenbelt Makati.

"The funny thing about having a mini-concert is, when I invite people to watch, they ask who the guests are," he elaborated. "It's as if they would watch the show for the guests and not for the performers. Usually, when a newcomer holds his or her first solo show, Regine would be the guest."

But his birthday show guests were nowhere as big as Regine. He explained, "That is one thing I picked up from Carol Mendiola. When I was still a nobody, she always had me as a guest performer. This was her way of giving new singers a break."

Which was exactly what he did. His guests included fan clubs, whom he described as "not yet a pro, but can really sing." He also had Gold Blisters, with whom he used to perform in a band, and Lani's sister Carlyn Dayrit.

"My intention now is to give struggling artists a break," he said. "If I didn't get my breaks, I would be a struggling up to now."



FOOTBOT — BY BILL AMEND

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BIRD MACHINE — BY MARIA ABEDA

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TULOOK — BY PAPU and TIOTUM HILAMBLANC

BEH — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Cleza

4	7							5
				7	9	2		6
	5	6		8		1		
	8		1		3			
	9	5		4		8	6	
			9		8		7	
		9		3		5	2	
5		3	4	2				
7							1	3

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Type and progress at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

4	8	2	3	1	4	7	5	9
9	5	1	2	7	6	3	4	8
7	3	4	9	5	8	6	1	2
1	2	5	4	9	1	8	9	7
4	7	8	6	9	3	2	2	1
1	6	9	1	3	2	5	8	4
5	1	6	8	9	3	4	7	2
2	9	7	6	4	5	8	1	3
8	4	3	1	2	7	9	6	5

FOR ALL its good intentions, 'RV' fails flat. Robin Williams, right, and his usual funnyman self.

'RV' not really a fun vacation

From page A2-4

ably-like and oblivious-to-the-Mormons' obvious dislike for them, but they almost totally steals the Mormons (Ortiz or two above family and togetherness because, well, sophisticated people don't know everything there is to know about happiness, apparently.

Altogether now, let's rob our eyes. "RV" shows how a financially stable family wants to become dysfunctional, but learn from unexpected interaction with more fulfilled people.

It's not very convincing, however, that Bob's family becomes tight and loving again by the movie's ending, but that's guaranteed and expected, given the premise. The execution just wasn't very amusing.

ARANETA CENTER

Gateway MALL Greenhills Theaters

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I WANNA BE HAPPY — SUPERMAN RETURNS — LOVE WRECKED — THE DA VINCI CODE

THE LAKE HOUSE — PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST — PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 3

MALL 5

1 I WANNA BE HAPPY — 2 SUPERMAN RETURNS — 3 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN 2
4 BRAND NEUTRAL — 5 SEE NO EVIL — 70 mm DOLBY

For ticket inquiries, please call Ticketfloor at 911 5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM

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July 23, Saturday - 7:30 pm

Pauleen Luna (Jason Abalos) · Iwa Moto · JC de Vera (Glaiza Cortez) · Francesca Fajardo · Rafchaye Escobido · and Boots Anson-Roa (Gladys de Castro) · Katreena Perez

Angelica Panganiban

WHITE LADY

directed by Jeff Tan

OPENS JULY 19

LADY ON 4627 and 2364

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. and REGAL MULTIMEDIA, INC.

For Trivia, Photo Gallery, Downloads and Updates log on to www.regalfilms.com/whitelady

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JULY 22, ROBINSONS PAMPANGA, 4pm * JULY 23, SM SUCAT, 4pm

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AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	2 SUPERMAN RETURNS	3 I WANNA BE HAPPY	4 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST		
G4	1 SUPERMAN RETURNS	2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	3 THE DA VINCI CODE			
	4 INITIAL D	5 UNITED 93	6 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	7 LOVEWRECKED		
GB1	1 SUPERMAN RETURNS	2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST				
GB3	1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST 1:00 4:15	2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST 3:15 6:30 9:30				
	3 LOVEWRECKED	4 SUPERMAN RETURNS	5 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST			
ATC	1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST				
	3 SUPERMAN RETURNS	4 LOVEWRECKED	5 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST			
ACC	1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	2 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	3 SUPERMAN RETURNS	4 SEE NO EVIL		
M2	1 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST	2 I WANNA BE HAPPY				
	3 INITIAL D	4 SUPERMAN RETURNS	5 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST			

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	TOWN
PBA All-Star Game, July 19 to 23, 2006	Mom's Free Furniture Exhibit, July 3 to 31, 2006
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Autobahn by Mazda Power, July 17, 2006	Babyshop Vroom!, July 21, 2006

Greenbelt 1 Shopping Rewards Showing Special Promos, May 5 to Oct. 31, 2006

Ongoing Philippines Launch, Mall Shows: Glorietta 1, July 14 - 16; Glorietta 2, 5, Oct. 14 & 22; For Inquiries, pls. call 581-8713

Ayala Museum — Side To Side Flying Mice, June 27 to August 27, 2006. For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc. 28 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

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Best Actor Musical / Comedy (Nathan Lane)
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Ayala Malls Cinemas

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ENTERTAINMENT

CINEMALAYA OPENS TODAY AT CCP

THE WEEK-LONG 3rd Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival opens today at the Main Theater of the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Pasay City. Eight full-length feature films are competing for the Best Picture trophy, which will be handed out in an awards show on July 23. Ten filmmakers are competing in the short-film category. Photo shows Cinemalaya officials with the participating filmmakers. From left, first row: Mike Olandesa, "Ang Huling Aswan ng Langgam" (full-length); Vic Acedillo Jr. and Sheryl Cuenca, "Barok, Sa Piyang Paloy" (FL); competition director Lucrecia Bolilan-Feleo; Pepe Diokno, "Ino-Passport Mundial" (short film); CCP president and festival director Nonon G. Jardin; Jeanne Lee, " Havi Passports Mundial"; festival congress head Nicanor Tiongson; Raz Dela Torre, "Lahaina" (SF); marketing committee head Bobbie Tan; Joey Emmanuel Tayla, "Rosario" (SF); Dennis Teodosio, "Sine Gini at Mamina" (SF); Reggie Quilo, "10:33 Ng Gabi" (SF). From left, second row: Adolf Alix Jr., "Donsol" (FL); Dado Lumibao (partly hidden), "Pelikula ni Oscar Ng," (FL); Francisco, third row: Ron Bryant, "Baranda" (FL); Margaret Garman, "Muntrain" (SF); Jerrold Beltrano, "Lima" (FL); Herbert Tiu, "Parang Pelikula" (SF); Mike Tolentino, "Oryanse" (SF); Ms. Isabel Sunshine Mercelita, "Pusang," Rose left, fourth row: Red Flor-ita, Florita Bautista, "Sana Magtanggo Si Happiness" (FL); Michael Tandojas, "Talad ng Dati" (FL); Brino Balan, "Sa Blum" (SF); Jack Cagaoa, "Point" (SF).

'Birit' syndrome compromises child singers' performances

LAST JULY 1, THE SECOND SEASON finale of the "Little Big Star" kiddie singing rib were held on Channel 2. Two boys, Christian and Robert, vied for the "Little" champ title, while four girls—Angelie, Krystha, Lauriss and Sarah, competed for the "Big" champion's crown.

The competition winners Robert and Angelie, but we must note that the finals were generally compromised by an excessive "birit" (distortion that practically forced the young contestants to push up the pitch of their accompaniment and resultantly, in the contestants yet lovely popular notion that "responsibly" high notes impress both judges and score awards.

Also, the kids' first renditions strained their voices and lent their performances a desperate note, and this cost both unfair and unfortunate.

We wish that local singing idiom in general, and kiddie competitions in particular, would steer clear of the birit syndrome, because it gives both singers and viewers a very wrong impression of what excellence in singing should be about.

Time, some (most?) Pinoy music fans think that high scores and belting volume are admirable, but they're really barking up the wrong musical tree, because our national character on love would indeed just both singers' vocal cords and listeners' eardrums.

More important, it's shallow, misleading, knee-jerk response. Sensible, and ignores much more important factors in performance factors like interpretation, height, vocal control, contrast, feeling, individuality—and, oh, intelligence?

It's particularly sad when child singers are compelled to come up with birit renditions, because their vocal cavities would be shunted off into a dead-end street of successive "sensitivity."

Other salient points of the "Little Big Star" season finale:

Some of the lasses weren't really all that credible as expert entertainers of singing talent. And some of them came up with impudicious comments that betrayed their wrong-headed mind-set.

One of them even apologetically stated, "Mawawala siguro kasi ako, it's young age, nakakabitaan ayos ng pagsasalita." Oh, please.

Fair enough, the finalists were made to dress, look and act like little adults. They were all decked out or dolled up in suits for the boys, and gowns for the girls. It was the "Little Miss Philippines" overdressed syndrome all over again.

And the lyrics of the child singers' songs were too adult for them. "I wanna move you, I need you here to wipe away my tears"—"I'll, gilas, nanonood ka, hahalik hamam ka, pauwi na ang puso kong nag-iisa!"—"I can make it through the rain"—"Langit ang buhay at tawag dito'y inspirasyon"—that sort of schmaltzy, uncanny thing.

We envision those aspects of performance because they give both singers and viewers have wrong-headed notions of what good singing should be like.

Kids are especially impressionable in that regard, so greater care should be made to protect them from the onset of the birit syndrome that has made pop-music appreciation in these parts such a conundrum.

Feedback

The conclusion of Paul R. Murrell's notes on "TV commercial limit."

"About two years ago, a big TV operator was heavily plugged to start telecasting at 9:30 p.m. But some advertising executives actually had to 10:30 p.m. due to overcrowding of commercials in the preceding programs!

"TV programs are now being plugged to start programs ng (previous program)." It's a pity to viewers and many writers that if they will only abide by the BSP rule (18 commercial minutes per hour), our TV shows can be telecasts on time, just like in the past.

"I believe the limit of 18 minutes commercial minutes per hour exists almost because, to the 'Sth and '70s, the bulk of TV programs consisted of 'imported' shows (Bonanza, etc.) whose program-to-ads were run only 42 minutes in length, to allow for 18 minutes of commercials. To be factual, the founding fathers of the BSP can be consulted in this regard.

"I remember that, when the CBP was formed, martial law was still in its early years, and the state controlled almost everything. But the BSP opted for self-regulation, and that set important word for the years. Everybody was fully aware that the airwaves belonged to the state or to the people, so no one should abused their use.

"In order to solve this problem, all people concerned should sit down and discuss it, remembering that they have a commitment that deserves to be treated fairly—the viewing public."

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

On the set of 'Donsol'

SHIELA Rosa and Jaclyn Jose play Sid's on-screen parents Rolai and Ligaya.

JACLYN with real-life son Gwen Zamora

"I'VE SEEN Sid act on TV; he's okay," says director Adolf. "I'm glad he accepted the role."

By Nestor U. Cruz
Photos by Rusty Hendoza

THE ROLE OF DANIEL, THE lovely Rusanding insurance Officer (ROI), in the independent film "Donsol" was originally meant for actor Marvin Agustin.

In a previous interview with Inquirer Entertainment, Agustin even mentioned his intention to produce "Donsol" for its writer-director Adolf Alix Jr.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

"Unfortunately we have had creative differences. He also wanted to fully finance the film, which was not possible because Donsol is an entry to the Cinemalaya film fest," explained Alix. Said Cinemalaya actor is entitled to a P500,000 grant. "In the end, Marvin and I agreed to just come up with another film soon."

Taking the place of Agustin is Sid Lucero, whom Alix described as "very believable as a ROI."

Playing Lucero's on-screen partner is Angel Aquino, who had to cut her hair really short for the role of Teresa, a breast cancer survivor.

"Donsol" will be premiere at the CCP Main Theater on July 19, 6:15 p.m.

CHILD actor Aaron Jamaica portrays Sid's brother Ino.

CHENE GI, Sid's real-life aunt, plays a journalist who goes to Donsol to interview townfolk, accompanied by Angel's character.

ANGEL, as Teresa, has had double mastectomy, so the actress had to bind her chest throughout the filming. With her is photo is Simon Ibarra (blog), center.

'RV' not really a fun vacation

REVIEW

By Oliver M. Palardoni
Contributor

WE CAN'T HELP IT.

Whenever we go on to watch a Robin Williams comedy, we expect to see the crazy hyperactive clown that he is well-known. He such look here, in the family-aimed flick "RV" Hyperactive is confined to Williams' performance as an irresponsible father and husband with mixed-up priorities.

Williams doesn't show any hint of his unpredictable comic genius here because the role demands that he be the imperfect, subdued character. That's okay; he's a talented enough actor. But we wish the character at least retained some of Williams' spontaneity. Here, he's just boring.

Gaps aside, "RV" is well-intentioned but lacks subtle humor and coherence. Director Barry Sonnenfeld ("Get Shorty," "Men in Black") could have delivered snappier pacing. Instead, we see telegraphed and painfully slow jokes that eat up most of the movie's running time, making us feel for the unhappy Munros (Williams, Cheryl Hines, Josh Gonzague and Josh Hutcherson) who go on a gambling road trip-vacation using the family vehicle.

There's obligatory tension, of course. The actual deal is ill-prepared for the rainy gritty of the impromptu break, which is partly a way for Bob to catch up and annul big company meetings along the way.

Bob's incompetence at driving an RV (motorized vehicle) goes old fast, but gets repeated over and over. We see him accidentally running over garden flowers, road signs, and the like. And the wide humor here is just... worse. The RV has a double-level sewage-disposal hose, so imagine how badly that would go. Gross.

The movie seems to have a grotesque fascination for yucky punch lines, too. For example, a vegetarian character accidentally eats deer organ (which reportedly makes her throw up all-around). It's understandable that most of the family members go through hell and, oh, do we feel their pain!

But the Munros clan is contrasted with the Gornicke family, a country-crooning Brady Bunch of the RV park community, if you will. Jeff (Jamie) and ROSS (Dorsworth do double-duty as the dedicated parents of sleepingly earnest and soundless kids. They're unbelievable.

TWINHEAD
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BUSINESS Monday
Business Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

PC BUYER'S GUIDE
cyber shot
PROMO

Max's gets Krispy Kreme franchise

HOT Original Glazed doughnuts

WINSTON-SALEM, NC.—Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Inc. (NYSE: KKD) has awarded development rights for the Philippines to The Real American Doughnut Company Inc., owned and operated by the principals of Max's, one of the Philippines' leading restaurant chains.

In light Krispy's development agreement with The Real American Doughnut Company Inc. will build a 110-premise store-deployment in the franchise.

"We are pleased to continue expanding Krispy Kreme's international reach with our first relationship in the Philippines," said Daryl Brewster, president and chief executive officer of Krispy Kreme.

"We are proud to partner with Max's," said Jeff Welch, Krispy Kreme's senior vice president of International development. "We believe that Max's, with over sixty years of experience operating restaurants in the Philippines, is uniquely qualified to introduce Krispy Kreme to this important marketplace."

"We are looking forward to bringing Krispy Kreme and the hot doughnut experience to our customers," said Robert Tiona, President of Max's Franchising Inc.

About Krispy Kreme

Founded in 1937 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Krispy Kreme is a leading branded retailer and wholesaler of high-quality doughnuts, including its signature Hot Original Glazed®.

There are some 310 Krispy Kreme stores and 90 satellites operating systemwide in the US, Australia, Canada, Mexico, South Korea and the UK.

About Max's

Founded in 1945, Max's is a leading Philippine restaurant specializing in chicken and traditional Filipino food.

Max's was started by Maxima Chantrain, a Manila-educated teacher.

There are currently approximately 118 Max's Restaurants operating in the Philippines and the US.

Wanted: Social entrepreneurs

Aim is to help other firms become financially viable

By Naomi W. Domingo

MORE THAN TAX breaks and other come-ons from the government, the biggest incentives for entrepreneurs are still the basics—access to equity financing and training, an environment conducive to doing business, and opportunities to acquire management and marketing savvy.

Silvestre A. Mirano Jr., a professor at the Asian Institute of Management, says underscoring the actual predicament of struggling business operators could be a great help for the so-called social entrepreneurs—the catalyst that drive the development of entrepreneurship.

Mirano differentiates between the business entrepreneur—whose basic aim is to maximize financial returns—and the social entrepreneur who plans more importance on financial sustainability.

"The latter's goal is to uplift the lives and improve the well-being of underprivileged and disadvantaged groups," the Asian AIM dean explains.

To achieve that goal, Mirano says social entrepreneurs need a better appreciation of what motivates, encourages and influences entrepreneurs to start a business and stay in business.

A major research he undertook found that, among 100 respondents, personal resources a deemed very important because in most cases a business cannot start without it.

Mirano says an online, related study—which the International Labor Organization commissioned to the Foundation for Rural Economic Enterprises and Development in 1996—may explain his case.

The ISRED study surveyed 1,341 microenterprises in the urban informal sector showed that one out of five respondents relied on personal savings to finance their ventures.

Of the funds that came from loans, 29 percent came from friends; 41 percent from loan sharks; 6 percent from banks; 6 percent from cooperatives; and 21 percent from other formal sources like lending investors.

Mirano says entrepreneurs rely on their own resources because there is very limited equity or venture financing in the country.

Equity financing includes the small business owners' personal resources like inheritance, savings, or proceeds from the sale of assets, but Mirano says more is needed from outside investors.

But unlike equity financing in the form of stockholders shares or what angel investors create when they provide funding.

Interestingly, other authorities say that while angel investors are related to the entrepreneurs are small owners or owners of equity financing, the main sources of such funds for small ventures continue to be family and friends.)

"What the venture capital corporations, formed jointly by commercial banks and the government during the Marcos period, provide are transaction financing," Mirano says.

"The government financial institutions have no equity financing mindset except for the financial and development banks that they have supported in the past," he adds.

Mirano says social entrepreneurs, as well as public development agencies, should design and promote equity financing.

He adds that government's greatest input to encourage entrepreneurship is providing an environment that is secure and conducive to business.

Small business would also be encouraged by limiting obstacles, regulations and trade barriers as well as reducing graft and corruption.

"We can see through the past few decades that the dramatic growth in new enterprises coincided with periods of high political and social stability such as the first seven years of Martial Law, the first three years of the Aquino administration, and the entire six years of President Fidel Ramos," Mirano says.

On the other hand, abrupt falls coincided with periods of high political and social instability such as the waning years of the Marcos presidency, the last three years of Aquino in Mindanao, and the second of President Joseph Estrada.

Once entrepreneurs have gained a strong foothold, social entrepreneurs need to help business owners master supply chain management, have access to markets and adopt modern management practices.

"The greatest challenge for social entrepreneurs and their organizations is to become more social and more entrepreneurial," Mirano says.

The point is, he says, not just to provide money but to change the way business is done and the people involved in the enterprise.

"Focusing on the entrepreneurial part, loan officers should be more conscious that their job is not simply to lend money but to nurture and grow the livelihood of clients."

JULY marks the end of the peak season of fishing in Magallanes.

Sardines create fishing industry in small town

MAGALLANES, SORSOGON—THERE WAS hardly a fishing industry here to speak of until 2004 when sardines started visiting Sorsogon Bay in search of water in July.

Elenor Balasco, 45, owns one of the lawlaw buying stations that sprouted in 2004 when sardines started visiting Sorsogon Bay in search of water in July.

He says four times more immediately put up that year to trade lawlaw because supply was so huge that the catch the locals could not consume was just returned to sea.

The lawlaw is back again this year, but the volume is not as big as before, Balasco says.

The good months run from January to July, then dips until December.

To take advantage of the excess supply, Balasco says trading firms based with canning companies in Metro Manila who were willing to take on the excess sardines.

From just four buying stations, the lawlaw industry here has grown to include more than 20 buying stations, with proprietors coming from as far as Nueva Ecija.

Sorsogon Bay is one of the bodies of water in Bicol included in the Fisheries Sector Program of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, which started in 1998.

The program is funded by the Asian Development Bank.

The Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) here says, however, that the phenomenal increase in the lawlaw population is foreseen. But to see all good omens becomes a reason that there are no more big fish in the area who eat the lawlaw.

But Butch Grisolia, 36, a fisherman in this town, is not complaining.

From earning just P500 from every fishing trip, he now earns a gross of P4,000-P5,000 from catching lawlaw.

The trading firms are likewise earning.

Balasco says that over the past two years, the buy-and-sell operation has been transporting from 150 to 500 boxes of packaged lawlaw to the canning factories in Manila.

"That's from a small truck to a ten-wheel or truck," he adds.

The unrefined industry likewise benefits the laborers hired to haul, repackage and

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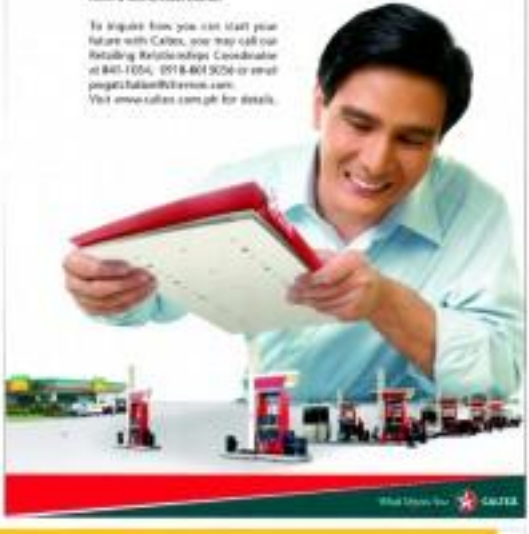
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Revisiting land reform

MAPping THE FUTURE
Augusto L. de Leon

AS CONGRESS RECONVENES next month, the extension of the Land Reform Law will surely be refurbished. Assuming how our legislators decide on the basis of political expediency, they are most likely to extend the life of the law without making any major changes to improve and make the law more effective as redistributive mechanism. Indeed – after 20 years – it should only be reasonable to expect that before amending the effectivity of the law, a review be made not only in terms of the land areas redistributed, but also as to how much land reform has really improved the lives of the farmers.

As many now realize, our land reform law is basically flawed by our adoption of the Taiwan model—land, stock, and barrel. Unfortunately, we have overlooked the fact that land reform was of Taiwan was a camouflage to make the confiscation and takeover by the Chiang Kai-Shek army more palatable to the international community. When the fleeing army retreated to Taiwan to escape the Communists, Taiwanese land was owned by the Taiwanese landowners. The soldiers of Chiang Kai-Shek, including land reformers who came with him, had to be given the occupied territory. To make the forced confiscation more acceptable to the Americans, it was disguised as Land Reform.

What we have overlooked in the land ownership is possibly only one component to improve the lives of the tillers. The agricultural land of Taiwan has much more developed infrastructure made possible by years of investments in the agricultural land. The Japanese had much to do to make agricultural land productive, with good irrigation, drainage and farming practices and infrastructure to market farm output.

When we turned over the farm land covered by land reform to our farmers, the supporting infrastructure was far from comparable to the infrastructure of Taiwan agriculture. Unfortunately, the new land owners have no capital resource. They are incapable of making the necessary capital investments. They have neither the investments to maximize the productivity of the land nor the working capital to operate the more developed agricultural land. As it is, government budget is hardly able to finance the working capital for planting and, thus, we are still struggling with the repairs of existing irrigation systems. For many farmers, there is still no irrigation available for seasonal, much less a third possible harvest a year. Farm-to-market roads are still very much work in progress.

The fact always held up to favor land reform is that farmers of Taiwan were able increase their income. What our overlook is that while actual land ownership may have been a factor, key decisions were made as to how much the rapid increase of industrial production made it possible for most of the rural population to shift from earning a living in the farm to earning a living from working in factories from populous decreased quickly, forcing the remaining farmers to adopt mechanization, which was more efficient. Fewer people shared in the fruits of the land, enabling those to have a higher per capita income. The main holistic Taiwan economic program created a complementary cycle of factories producing goods and services while the agricultural sector was growing to be healthy buyers for said goods and services.

In a country without the set of circumstances, now is an opportune time to reflect on the results of our legislation. Other than the present criteria of land size that has to be shored up, here are three considerations that our legislators would do well to think over before the land reform law is extended.

First is the consideration of how much investment has been made or can be made by the land owner to increase the production output of the land.

The second is the amount of taxes that the land owners has been and would be paying if the land were not agricultural.

Third is the need to review and set policies regarding idle agricultural land resources.

The debate in the land reform extension agenda will be relevant if these three issues are included.

Otherwise, the effective period of the law may just as well be allowed to lapse and the resources be redistributed among all the other departments and agencies of government so as to address the needs of the agricultural sector. ■

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is Principal Consultant of de Leon Consulting, Feedback at augusto@globelines.com.ph)

Sardines . . .

Front page BUSINESS 1

pack the boats into the trucks.

Balaoro says he pays them P35 for every ton of sardines that they put on the truck.

Nicenia Sierra, 44, says he quit vending a year ago to become a tawilan capacitor during the peak season because he earns more.

Sierra says the work starts at midnight when the fishermen deliver their catch to the buying station.

They would unload boxes of lambay, weighing 30 kilos each, which the fishermen initially packed at sea, then repack them in boxes containing 32 kilos of sardines each.

Balaoro says that during the peak season, the lambay industry generates jobs for at least 200 families in the coastal town.

He buying stations alone hires at least 40 persons a day to sort the week done.

He observes that the local economy has become more vibrant, with the growth in selling items in the community.

Mayor Pepe Carmona says the seasonal solution of lambay catch has likewise contributed significantly to the coffers of municipal local government unit due to the tariff of P18 for every ton transported out of the town.

Carmona says P8 go to the municipal coffers while the remaining 10 P, when the buying station is located, goes a P2 share from each ton.

He says it may be unrealistic to expect the volume of lambay to stay where it is in the coming years.

But until the volume drops, the coastal town has every intention of making the most of the unexpected bounty. *Jaime Bolaños Jr., PIA Southern Luzon Bureau*

Helping awaken RP's coffee industry

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PUSH IS SPEARheading a campaign to revitalize the local coffee industry through grass roots initiatives designed to convince farmers to plant coffee.

According to Raul Lumagbas, head of North Philippines Inc.'s agricultural services department, these initiatives have done much to change the landscape for coffee farmers, creating much more favorable conditions for coffee farmers today than in decades past.

"Unlike before, coffee farmers now have direct access to Nestle's purchasing clerk that their coffee harvest will fetch the best possible price, whether it's just one sack or a truckload," says Lumagbas.

Since the late 90s, Nestle's flagship coffee brand, has nurtured a buying policy wherein coffee farmers are assured only one of their crops is priced based on the prevailing market price and Nestle's coffee grading system. Buying stations located throughout the country have been set up to buy green coffee beans directly from the farmers, eliminating middlemen from the transaction and allowing farmers to earn more from their crops. Today, Nestle is the single largest coffee buyer in the Philippines, guaranteeing that coffee farmers receive the full fruits of their labor.

But perhaps the largest challenge facing the coffee industry as the government is how to convince farmers to take the first steps in planting coffee. Coffee plants need two years to mature before yielding their first harvest. But even this does not faze Lumagbas, who points out that thanks to the developments of the Coffee Based Sustainable Farming System (CBSFS), in line with Intensified Agriculture Initiative (IAOS) at Nestle, farmers now have a means of planting cash crops in between coffee trees. The Nestle Philippines Inc. Agricultural Services Department in Tagum City, Davao del Norte is one of a handful of locations where farmers can receive comprehensive training on CBSFS.

With the CBSFS, farmers are given step-by-step training on cash crops which can be planted along with coffee to supplement their income in the months as well as provide additional revenues once the coffee plants mature. The CBSFS frees farmers from relying purely on coffee as a source of income and also gives them the freedom to keep coffee crops so that it can be sold at an optimum price.

To help farmers increase their yield and manage their crops, Nestle established in 1996 the Nestle Experimental and Demonstration Farm (NEDF) also located in Tagum City. The NEDF serves as a laboratory for new and improved farming methods, a provider of planting materials such as seedling and cuttings, and a training ground for coffee farmers who wish to maximize their yield.

Through the NEDF, Lumagbas hopes coffee farmers will learn to change with times and become competitive on the world market once more. At one point, the Philippines ranked third, now only to Brazil and Colombia in terms of coffee production. But in order to reclaim the place as a coffee powerhouse in the world commodities market, there is still much that has to be done.

To illustrate the need for initiatives and programs like the NEDF, he cites farmers in Lipa, the historical center of coffee growing in the Philippines, who are reluctant to part with old farming methods like single-crop cultivation despite irrefutable data that show the quality of the coffee is in no way affected by the multi-crop method which encourages the yield of a plant. It explains why despite its long association with coffee, Batangas has since been overtaken by southern provinces in Luzon in terms of coffee production.

In terms of quality, Lumagbas is quick to point out that soil and weather conditions through many parts of the Philippines are ideal for planting Robusta coffee beans which are generally acknowledged to be of world class quality.

Eventually, Lumagbas hopes even more farmers will come to realize that with proper farm management and improved farming techniques, there's money to be made through planting coffee. He is optimistic that renewed interest in agriculture will usher a new generation of entrepreneurial farmers eager to capitalize on inroads made in coffee farming methods developed over the past decade.

FARMERS are given training on cash crops which can be planted with coffee. Right photo shows Lumagbas.

Credit cards: Part of life

THE CREDIT CARD'S ABILITY TO STRETCH your purchasing power by providing extra liquidity has also enabled you to acquire bigger purchases like home appliances.

This extra convenience has extended to basic household expenses such as electric and telephone bills.

Being credit cards is no longer charge-and-pay-after-words kind of service. Credit cards are now packed with features initial fit to the needs of every customer—reward points that enable you how items or gifts and discounts at partner establishments.

Rolando Tinchanco, president of the Credit Card Association of the Philippines (CCAP), observes: "Majority of credit card products now integrate a rewards program as one way to retain customer loyalty. And as industry competition heightens, the customer wins with the rewards programs getting more and more generous." As credit card issuers fine themselves coming up with new features to make their rewards packages more appealing, customers are given more choices, lower deals and lower interest rates.

"Apart from rewards programs, credit card companies are also leveraging on their businesses to get more online deals for the customer. This is why you are seeing installment payment options at more stores...some even offering zero percent. And the best news, we believe it can only get better for the customers as card companies fight for wallet share," he adds.

It is therefore no surprise that given the situation of today's consumer, the credit card is no longer a luxury but a necessity, thanks to the convenience, security and financial flexibility this powerful bit of plastic provides. And so here's to the credit card, a one of a kind item that definitely deserves to be designated as a basic need of life.

Bank offers 5% interest

RECENTLY LAUNCHED UK MONEY BANK announced a checking account that offers a 5-percent interest rate for three months. The Flex Checking Account offers this high rate for customers who open from June 30 to Sept. 28, 2006, and maintains a P50,000 average daily balance (ADB) for three months. The account also provides customers with the convenience of access to funds via ATM cards and checkbook.

GE Money Bank opened 29 branches on June 19, 2006 in various locations in the Philippines. Identifying a strong growth opportunity in the country, GE Money Bank aims to provide a "simply better banking" experience to Filipino customers through speed, flexibility, customer-focus, and personalized service.

GE Money Bank holds a solid track record in Asia and other emerging markets. Since Turkey or Thailand, it currently serves more than 130 million customers in 47 countries worldwide. Now, GE Money brings to the Philippines this global expertise in risk management, simplified and business management practices for the benefit of the Filipino consumers, securing them of a banking partner they can grow with.

In the Philippines, GE Money Bank operates 6-30 branches. For more information call 7218000, or visit www.gemoney-bank.com.ph.

Evolution of Pinoy piggy banks

THE "PINOY" way of saving has was with empty tin cans where coins were put until these were full. Others used the "kumpay" and other creative representations of a coin bank.

HOW DID THE CONCEPT OF THE "piggy bank" evolve into the culture of Pinoys?

Saving, for Filipinos, started even in the old times. It is a heritage passed on by our ancestors further developed by the blend of Hispanic and other Asian cultures that inhabited the country.

The Filipinos are naturally "tuscapil," so to speak. There is an inherent Filipino characteristic of thriftiness that even in the midst of scarcity, a small amount of savings is a significant instrument for the future.

The Pinoy way of saving their way done by the use of old and empty tin cans where Pinoys dropped in their coins regularly until it was full. Others used the "kumpay" and other creative representations of a coin bank.

Being of largely agricultural economies, many Filipino families of yesteryears do backyard farming. This included small-scale hog and poultry raising where food for these animals largely came from leftovers. Feeding expenses was relatively minimal and in due time, the hogs and fully grown hogs and poultry were sold to market dealers and earnings were enjoyed.

Because of this traditional economy trait, the concept of saving by raising hogs evolved into the development of "piggy banks" as one of the creative representation of a coin bank. These are pig-shaped and designed coin banks which Filipino families started using and eventually gained much popularity and acceptance. Soon, it has become part of the Filipino culture.

Nowadays, modern coin banks come in all forms and sizes. But the tradition and authentic Filipino saving mood represented by the "piggy bank" can never be outdated.

Believing in this genuinely Filipino way of saving, The Bank Bank, a fast-growing thrift bank that noticed and fed a savings-driven campaign among the children in 2000, now popularly called "Banko...Banko... Ang dapat at Magiging!" in partnership with the Department of Education, continues to promote the use of these "piggy banks."

Children, aged 12 years and below, who open a free Kiddie Savers' Club (SKSC) account, are each given their own 4BSC piggy bank upon reaching P100 monthly ADB. They are encouraged to save their coins in these piggy banks and bring the same back to the bank when they are filled up, after depositing and money, the piggy banks are returned to the children for another period of saving which turned out to be a creative way of developing the habit of saving in them.

Truly, introducing the value of saving among the children starts at their young age and imbibing in them the Filipino culture and tradition of using the piggy bank is a worthy endeavor. Doing this will surely help our youth become the country's future nation builders.

'Pink' direct selling . . .

From page B3-4

the Vendocentric in color is faster than skin color," he says.

Mary Kay began operations in the Philippines in May 2000 by Philippine-American sales agents from the US. It met some problems initially but was able to establish operations and attract a good sales network.

Starting a Mary Kay independent business costs P1,875 for a starter kit and educational materials. Mary Kay is known for the pink color—it awards its top sales people the use of pink cars. In the Philippines these are pink Honda cars; in the US it's a pink Cadillac or even a pink Pontiac depending on the sales levels achieved by the beauty consultant.

Bacungan says they are preparing a pink Jeepney for their top sales agents in the Philippines.

Software firm sets up loan package for SMEs

ETHERBILLING ITS UNIQ accounting system through the support of a financial software distribution, the 75,000-strong Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA) linked up with local QuickBooks distributor e-Methods for Business Management Inc. (e-BMI) for its customized accounting requirements.

Papa president David L. Balangue signed a three-year agreement with e-BMI chairman and CEO Gareb Hael Dalmia to allowing e-BMI to provide QuickBooks products, SME training, technical support and point-of-sale for updates.

The accredited professionalization of CPAs received 18 new licenses of QuickBooks.

Developed by Intuit, the financial software products, QuickBooks targets financial professionals and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

e-BMI recently arranged a special assistance package that SMEs can avail from Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corp. (SBGFC) in developing their systems. Through e-BMI, a qualified entrepreneur can borrow up to P500,000 from SBGFC for use in other productivity solutions.

SMEs account for 99 percent of over 900,000 existing enterprises in the country today based on figures from the National Statistics Office. Studies revealed that SMEs, despite their lack of financial resources, want to keep up with technology.

BUSINESS Monday

'Pink' direct selling firm finds hit in white line

By Margie Quiroz-Espino

MERCADO

KE SAYS NOBODY BELIEVES him but Bernard T. Mercado, general manager of Mary Kay (Philippines) Inc., sells people accessories of the direct selling cosmetics firm are showing up.

This despite the fact that industry growth has just been "stable," according to the Direct Selling Association of the Philippines.

Mercado, who has worked with several other direct selling firms, says sales during the first half of the year rose 79 percent compared with the previous year's first six months, and sales from 2004 to 2005 grew by 61 percent.

The firm's sales target for this year is P400 million. Both of these sales usually come in the last quarter. While this amount may be small compared with sales of other direct selling firms Let Accs for example, one top director has annual sales of over P200 million), the growth posted by the firm is worth talking about.

How did Mary Kay the Texas-based firm, started by Mary Kay Ash when she was already in her 40s, defy the local trend?

Mercado says via a two-pronged approach. The firm launched a whitening posture line and made the facial line program for its sales agents more attractive by lowering the targets.

Last March, Mary Kay launched its PureWhite system, a skin brightening line that became a hit in Asia and the Philippines.

Mercado admits the Philippines, and the rest of Asia for that matter, is still a huge market for whitening products—yes, even China, where most women are already fair skinned.

Lowering the sales targets for its agents was a strategic move that created a psychological boost to its sales agents.

Mercado explains that by having easier targets, this resulted in "small wins first" that later required the sales agents to work harder to sell more.

During the opening of the Mary Kay plant in China for example, many qualified for the trip, which was an incentive because of lower sales requirements.

Mary Kay products are priced higher than some of their competitors. The target market is generally the working women. As such the sales agents the firm employs are usually single women with half of us 30,000 "independent beauty consultants" as they call their sales agents, doing Mary Kay on the side only.

Mercado says 60 percent of their sales come from their distributor problems. The firm is geared more toward skin products than color (eye shadow, lipstick) as

PINK, B2-1

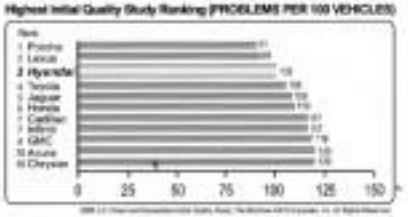
Hyundai

"Highest Ranked Compact Multi Activity Vehicle in Initial Quality Study"

Drive your way

HYUNDAI
"Highest Ranked Non-Premium Nameplate"
"Top 3 Among All Nameplates"

Highest Initial Quality Study Ranking (PROBLEMS PER 100 VEHICLES)



Since 1968, J. D. Power and Associates has been conducting quality and customer satisfaction research based on survey responses from millions of consumers worldwide. It represents the voice of the customer by translating survey responses from consumer's businesses into studies and reports, which businesses worldwide use to improve their business. J. D. Power and Associates has developed and maintains one of the largest, most comprehensive historical customer satisfaction databases in existence, which includes feedback on the shopping, buying, and ownership experiences for a variety of products and services. On April 1, 2005, J. D. Power and Associates became a business unit of the McGraw-Hill Companies.

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Hyundai Azera Receives J.D. Power And Associates' APEAL Award

The all-new 2006 Hyundai Azera earned distinction from J.D. Power and Associates today as the most appealing Large Car in the 2006 Automotive Performance, Execution and Layout (APEAL) Study. In addition, the Hyundai Tiburon (Coupe) ranked second in the Compact Sporty Car segment.

"In its first year of production, the Azera has earned recognition for high quality, impressive safety features and, now, consumer appeal," said Mark Barnes, vice president, National Sales, Hyundai Motor America. "In addition, the Tiburon sporty coupe continues to impress owners with its dynamic styling, performance and safety, adding depth and diversity to our product portfolio."

The Azera trophy case has grown recently with a number of honors and awards. It captured the AutoFocus 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award (VSA) for the Large Car category. Forbes.com named the Azera the Best Luxurious Car for a Non-luxury Price in its 2006 "Best Cars for the Bucks" list. J.D. Power and Associates' Initial Quality Study (IQS) ranked Azera second in the Large Car segment. Finally, the 2006 Azera earned the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) top crash test ratings for frontal offset impacts, aided by unsurpassed standard safety equipment like Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Anti-lock Brakes (ABS) and eight airbags.

The Tiburon also scored high marks in the 2006 J.D. Power and Associates Initial Quality Study, ranking second in the Compact Sporty Car segment.

This annual APEAL Study measures owner delight with the design, content, layout and performance of their new vehicles. The study is based on responses from more than 63,000 purchasers and lessees of new 2006 model-year cars and trucks who were surveyed after the first 90 days of ownership.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is an ISO 9001-registered global marketing information services firm operating in key business sectors including market research, forecasting, consulting, training and customer satisfaction. The firm's quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumer annually. J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of the McGraw-Hill Companies. J.D. Power and Associates can be accessed through the World Wide Web at www.jdpower.com.

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BUSINESS
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ICS Rental Services

Finance taps NBI in corruption drive

PAL delays decision on new planes

By Dodee L. Lucas

FLAG CARRIER PHILIPPINE AIRLINES (PAL) has delayed its decision on which brand and type of wide-bodied aircraft to acquire as part of its plan to boost capacity for trans-Pacific flights.

In a telephone interview, PAL president and chief operating officer Jaime Bautista said the airline's management was still ready to negotiate with representatives of US aerospace giant Boeing Co. and European plane maker Airbus Industrie.

"We will probably be able to make a decision [on the type of aircraft to be acquired] before the end of the first [quarter]," he said.

The airline is in the process of deciding whether it will acquire four Boeing 777s or four Airbus A340-600s for its routes to the US west coast and to Vancouver, Canada—PAL's most profitable routes.

The PAL chief had recently set the deadline for the decision at the end of the second quarter. The deadline was not met because the airline continued to shop for the best deal from other manufacturers, he said.

PAL, B4

Lifestyle check on erring Customs, BIR employees

By Michelle V. Rerea

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE WILL TAP THE ASSISTANCE OF the National Bureau of Investigation in conducting lifestyle checks against suspected corrupt officials and employees of revenue-collecting agencies.

Finance Undersecretary Leandro Mendoza Jr. told reporters that the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS), the unit in the DOF tasked with combating corruption, has started exploratory talks with the NBI on how the latter's services could be used in cracking down on erring revenue personnel.

"What we [RIPS] intend to do is to give them [NBI] the names of people that can be placed under investigation. The NBI can be a significant help because investigation is its field of expertise," Mendoza said.

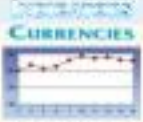
The finance official said RIPS was already preparing the list of people to be investigated. The charter of RIPS allowed it to work multi-

FINANCE, B7

IN THIS ISSUE

SC likens bank to Shylock /B6
90% of OFW remittances now sent through banks /B10

CURRENCIES



$1.39 =

Lackluster trade seen

THE STOCK MARKET WILL REMAIN DRIVEN mostly by surging crude oil prices and declining global equities markets following the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, analysts said.

Fitzgerald Sicam, head of research and strategy at BDO Trust, said investors would be worried with oil prices hovering at unprecedented $78 a barrel. "If the situation

JACQUATER, B1

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WESTERN UNION

Negros goes organic

By Carla P. Gomez
Visayan Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—THE RIO OF NEGROS IS hard to get a piece of the multi-million dollar organic food industry got closer from the Department of Agriculture.

At the start of the first Negros Island Organic Farmers Festival here last Thursday, Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban said the DA would help in advertising and marketing the island's organic products.

Panganiban said the DA would also give Negros Island a date for the processing of its products.

Earlier, the DA gave the Negros Occidental and Oriental Negros provincial governments P5 million each to farm into organic food centers.

Panganiban said the effort of the two Negros provinces to produce mainly organic food throughout the island was the first in the country and deserved the support of the government, particularly since there was great demand in the world market for organic food.

Oriental Negros Gov. George Arnaiz said the launching of the organic festival heralded the entry of Negros into the organic food market.

"It actually set a springboard toward realizing our presence felt in the international community and in our participation in the International Farmer's Congress in 2010," he said.

Organic food sales were estimated at $23 million and growing at 10 percent a year.

"Thus is why we in Negros aim to make our entire island the organic food bowl of Asia," he said. "We have also bound ourselves to prohibit the entry of genetically-modified plants and animals in the Island."

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon said the island-wide organic venture would strengthen the relationship between the two Negros provinces.

Repealing the debt penalty

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

"GOVERNMENT CANNOT REPEAL the debt penalty," writes Isl Abel Bello, an Ateneo colleague who examines the current state of the public debt in a paper we are writing together.

It seems an apt way to describe the situation, to mark avenues to in-stead, for sounding counterpoint. The debt penalty, indeed, is as quite unlike the debt penalty.

For one thing, the death penalty falls on just a few individuals, but the debt penalty falls on all Filipinos without exception.

Many will argue that the former is a necessary instrument of justice; there is nothing just about the latter. Failing as it does on people who had absolutely nothing to do with incurring the original debts in the first place. And while it has been possible to lift the death penalty with the stroke of a pen, lifting the debt penalty will take a great deal more than that, and will take a far longer time.

Mind boggling

According to latest calculations, each Filipino has a share of P48,840 of the government's total public debt. This comes from the April figure on the national government debt, which is now within a hair's breadth of P4 trillion (P3.996 trillion, to be exact), and this does not yet include the sums owed by government corporations. Counting that, total public sector debt is approaching P6 trillion.

If that figure isn't mind boggling enough, think of it as a chain of P1000 bills lined up side by side reaching all the way to the moon and back 12 times. Or if you prefer to stack them up, the wad would be about four billion pesos high!

And there's more. Still we counsel in the figure are the contingent liabilities, which result from government guarantees on borrowings or commitments of government corporations. That's some class another half trillion pesos (P546 billion).

For example, if the Idea SET doesn't get enough passengers to raise the guaranteed minimum stream of payment to the private company that built it, we taxpayers step in to make up for the difference. That scenario debt became a real debt that was actually paid in past years.

Growing debt service

In 2005, the outstanding debt of the national government was P3.8 trillion, amounting to about 72 percent of our GDP or total income for the economy. In 2003, the figure was P3.3 trillion, equivalent to 70 percent of GDP at the time.

But total debt service payments—that is, interest and principal amortization combined—rose enormously over the years, from P475 billion in 2003, to P581 billion in 2004, P654 billion in 2005, and P725 billion this year.

Taken against the government's total revenues, debt servicing in 2003 took P1 out of every P4 (25 percent) of revenue. The figure increased to P1 out of every P5 (20 percent) in 2004, and rose yet further to P1 out of every P10 of revenue (10 percent) in 2005.

Our government is like a wage worker whose fixed-by neighborhood "5.6" lender takes away P5 out of every P10 from his pay envelope on payday.

The good news is that the projected figure for 2006 is back to 75 cents to a peso of revenue; the bad news is that the reduction is due to new and expanded taxation.

Caught in a pyramid

The data affirm what the Asian Development Bank (ADB) observed last year, i.e., that the government is trapped in a Ponzi (financial pyramid) situation.

It needs to keep borrowing more to meet debt servicing and public expenditure requirements. But for more he able to borrow more, creditors need to be comfortable about our willingness and ability to pay back, and that demand that more tax revenues be implemented.

The debt penalty that Filipinos must carry will therefore continue to be large. Worse, given realities in our tax system, this burden disproportionately falls more heavily on the poor.

Hence, it cannot be stressed enough that aggressive debt management is needed to free up more funds for poverty reduction and health and education, whose shares in the national budget continue to decline.

The government needs to parlay its current debt reduction opportunities with endeavors to explore conversion of debt service payments into funds for basic public services, poverty reduction programs, and ultimately, economic growth to enable us to "grow out of" the debt problem.

But for creditors to be sympathetic, the government must be convincing about its sincerity and long-run viability which ultimately rests on its legitimacy. Does the present government have, all these? What do you think our creditors are thinking?

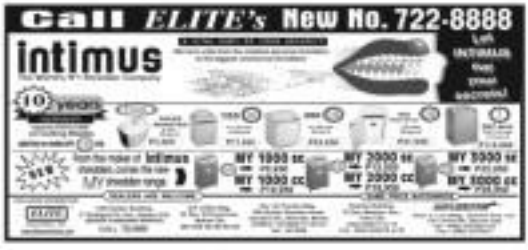
Blessing in disguise?

If there's one thing good about the 2006 budget not having been passed by Congress, it seems to be the way it has kept the government deficit down.

The government will announce the June fiscal data today, and the expectation is for another budget surplus for the third month in a row, keeping the overall deficit well within target. The government cannot be expected to stretch it to find ploy for the year, and that is helping keep new borrowings down.

But as we saw above, that hasn't kept debt service from growing, as should the outlook for rising interest rates and expectations of an oil price outburst—making of the year won't help at all. I'm afraid the debt penalty will be with us for quite a bit more time to come.

Comments welcome at chabito@inmail.ph



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Euronet eyes ATM firm

By Doris C. Dumlao

GLOBAL ELECTRONIC PAYMENT GIANT Euronet Worldwide Inc. has offered to buy to-local-accumulated teller machine connectors Banco Inter Inc. as part of its bid to enter the fledgling ATM outsourcing business in the Philippines.

Banco Inter chair and Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. director Angelito Villanueva told reporters at the sidelines of the AFM network's 10th anniversary celebration Friday that talks on a possible partnership with Euronet, a global leader for processing secure electronic financial transactions based on the technology-heavy Nasdaq, started last April.

But last week, Villanueva said Euronet made a final offer to invest in Banco Inter and be part of its management team. He said Banco Inter, the biggest ATM network in the country in terms of membership, would have to commit its member-banks since previous discussions focused only on capital commitments on ATMs.

If the proposal would be accepted, he said Banco Inter would benefit from the infusion of world-class e-banking technology as Euronet would have deeper involvement instead of becoming only a service provider for the ATM network.

"If at all, it's either that we form a new company, a subsidiary of Euronet, and they will put in equity there or directly in Banco Inter," Villanueva said, noting that member-banks would likely be open to giving Euronet a minority interest.

"We certainly hope that we could get an agreement in place (so soon) so possibly, this could it takes months, about six months, depending on the agreement that we may be able to forge," he said.

Across the globe, Villanueva said banks were investing less in expensive fixed assets like ATMs and instead focusing on their core businesses like lending and deposit-taking. He noted that in the United States, for instance, more than half of ATMs were no longer owned by banks but were operated by third-party providers like Euronet.

He said the same trend was dawning in the Philippines and big banks like Metrobank would welcome the entry of third-party ATM providers.

"We [in Metrobank] have more than 900 ATMs. In some areas, we have to have an armored car, pay for security, insurance, and pay people who will do the reconciliation of every thing," Villanueva said.

"But ours as glaring right now is it's too expensive to maintain offsite ATMs because shopping malls are charging too exorbitant rentals and driving up the cost. In 20- many banks are resorting less to ATMs," he said.

He said a franchise team would soon relocate Euronet's operations in the Senate, Makati, where it had a tie-up with ATM Assets on end-to-end e-payment transaction processing.

Euronet is in the business of connecting financial institutions, mobile operators and retailers with an advanced infrastructure for secure transaction processing across 41 countries. It operates the biggest independent European ATM network and the largest shared ATM network in India.

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PAL delays ...

Sources said both Boeing and Airbus have local representatives who are to negotiate commercial terms with PAL on the prospective orders, although he declined to disclose which manufacturer the Lucio Tan-owned airline favored at present.

Instead, he noted that the carrier was interested to see at its main criteria the fuel and maintenance efficiency of either type.

"We are looking at the market specifications, but both planes are very good," he said.

Industry observers note that the Boeing 777 may have a slight edge in terms of fuel and maintenance efficiency because it uses only two engines, as opposed to the four-engine Airbus A340.

On the other hand, PAL already has four A340s in its fleet and its pilots, ground maintenance crew are already familiar with its workings—a fact that translates into cost

From page B1

savings if PAL chooses the type.

"There is much a thing as equipment commonality when considering aircraft acquisition," the airline president said.

Once PAL decides on either Boeing or Airbus, Sources said that he expected the first aircraft to be in service within two years.

"It takes about 18 months to build one plane, so the will take then," he explained, adding that the first actual being considered will not be delivered to PAL till as soon, but will instead be shipped in as they are built.

The PAL chief said earlier that the new aircraft would be acquired on a "dry lease" basis with an option for the airline to buy them at the end of the lease contract.

PAL has a fleet of 32 aircraft, representing a mix of wide-bodied jets and smaller regional planes for domestic and short-haul international operations.

SC likens bank to Shylock

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN AS many years, the Supreme Court has taken to task Banco Filipino for charging "usurious trouble" interest rates on its borrowers.

The SC First Division, chaired by Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, noted that the savings bank had charged more than 68-percent interest a year on a 1979 loan that was supposed to carry an interest rate of an more than 21 percent.

Panganiban, who used to add Biblical quotes in his Supreme Court pleadings when he was still a Banco Filipino lawyer, did not take part in the deliberations, allowing Justice Romeo Callejo Sr. to write the decision who, this time, quoted William Shakespeare instead.

Callejo noted that the original loan of P400,000 taken by spouses Antonio and Dina Uhe of Davao City had already been taken over and paid P725.1 million by businessmen James and Francis Ee Emilano.

Still, Banco Filipino objected to the release of a P1.00-million check consigned by the Uhe couple to a Makati court, claiming that the Uhas check should only be applied as partial payment to their loan, which the bank estimated to have reached, net of other previous payments, more than P2E.3 million by end-1998.

The Court of Appeals had already characterized Banco Filipino's more than 68-percent interest rate as "excessive, iniquitous, unconscionable, and extortionate," Callejo noted, likening the thrift bank to Shylock, the moneylender in the Shakespeare play "The Merchant of Venice," who asked for a literal pound of flesh as payment for the money he lent.

Callejo agreed with the appellate court that since December 1991 when the check was consigned, Banco Filipino had no more to even acknowledge that the check was to be used as partial payment to whatever the Uhas owed.

"Indeed, absent the prior acceptance by petitioner bank or a judicial declaration that the consignation had been properly made, the [Uhases] remain the owners of the sum," Callejo said.

In December 2004, the SC First Division, chaired by then Chief Justice Hilario Davide, also declared that the 3-percent monthly penalty surcharge that Banco Filipino had imposed on a 1978 loan, this time obtained by the Tiodisi family of Cebu, was in violation of the then Usury Law.

(Disclosure: Ike having written a series of critical columns, Cockscales is now a defendant in a P5-billion libel suit filed by Banco Filipino.)

Cocktales

Victor C. Agustin

Money-go-round

• MANILA Mayor Jejomar Binay is working on a plan to install free Wi-Fi coverage, initially in select schools and buildings and eventually throughout the city, in time for Christmas.

• THE FORBES Park Association is lobbying City Hall to retain the country's most exclusive neighborhood in the tougher R-1 classification, instead of the present R-2, which apparently would allow duplexes to be built, especially along McKinley Road, despite the subdivision's deed of restrictions.

Heard through the grapevine

THE TANTUCO siblings want to fold the profitable Starbucks coffee chain into the Benitez Group, but Starbucks principal Howard Thurston Lupton is adamantly opposed to the idea.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Inquirer Job Expo 2006 opens today

INQUIRER JOB MARKET, THE INQUIRER'S recruitment section, partners with GMA Network in helping the government address the ever-increasing unemployment in the country by staging the biannual Job Market Employment Expo 2006 today until July 18 at the Dusitdeka Activity Center.

At least a hundred companies including FLOT, IBM, Fujitsu, 3M, Alaska, Convergys, eTelecare, Aparc, Glenrobgrit, Kuraiseto and Metrobank will seek to fill their job vacancies.

To avoid the long queues at the registration, job seekers may download a registration form at www.jobmarketonline.com that they can fill out and present for an express entrance.

On July 18, the "Engineer's Handbook" here will talk about "Experiences of a broadcast journalism." Free sizes are on a first come-first served basis.

Lackluster trade seen

From page B1

revenue improves, oil prices may drop quickly," Aduo said.

Conrado Ibay, president of online broker Citisecurities.com, said the drop in the market last week was due to the cessation in the libidinous fuel causing foreign funds to shift out of risky assets such as the emerging markets to US bonds.

RB Capital Securities said in a weekly report that record oil prices and the US Dow Jones' sharp 396-point drop in the last two trading days knocked down the local market last week.

As a result the benchmark index lost 2.1 percent week on week.

"For trading sessions' intervening given the rise of power still, also and the rise in gold prices, investors interest was focused on utility stocks speculated to be in lock for the bidding of upcoming cash-generating (power) projects," RB Capital securities said.

All Capital said seven that Mines Corp., the country's biggest independent power producer, would be planning to make its Philippine unit Mirant Philippines Corp. further interest in hyper energy units Fire One Corp. and Manila Electric Co.

Spillover buying in Ayala Corporate also noticeable as it announced plans to construct into the power sector late last year.

Gold prices went up 70 percent in the past month, boosting local stocks with a play on gold.

With the weakness in global markets, the market ignored robust OFW remittances, which grew 20.6 percent year-on-year to $2.14 billion in May. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

LGUs ready to settle back taxes

LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS (LGUs) committed to finally settle their back taxes with the Bureau of Internal Revenue, including unremitted withholding taxes since the 1990s, could encourage all of a cut in their share of the national budget.

The Philippine Association of Local Treasurers and Assessors (Philtra), headed by Quezon City Treasurer Victor Endrigo, said the organization already got the commitment of its members to do an audit of their outstanding tax balances and remit these to the BIR.

The delinquency of some LGUs in remitting income and value-added taxes they withheld from employees and suppliers has long been a problem for the BIR, which has blamed weak tax collection partly on the failure of LGUs to pay their taxes.

The problem has been brought to the attention of the Department of Finance, head agency of the BIR, which then directed LGUs to settle their back taxes.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves had last talks with Endrigo and other Philtra officials on how to force the LGUs to pay the back taxes.

Endrigo recommended that the BIR leave collection by simply earning the LGUs share in the annual national budget.

"This way, we serve justice to both local and national governments," Endrigo said.

Under the Local Government Code, 40 percent of the revenues collected by the national government should be given to LGUs to help fund projects and programs of local communities.

To underscore the significance of the unremitted taxes by the LGUs, the DOF said Revenue Region 5 alone owes the BIR some P263.11 million in unremitted withholding taxes.

The most delinquent LGUs in the revenue region include Caloocan City, which has P91.91 million worth of back taxes and penalties; Malolos, Bulacan, P6.7 million; Valenzuela City, P4.719 million; and Malabon, P3.86 million. — Michelle V. Rosca

NDC to float ₱2B in bonds

Gov't firm given go-ahead to borrow ₱10B-₱20B

By Michelle V. Rosca

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CO. (NDC) will float P2 billion worth of bonds this week to raise funds for the government's infrastructure projects.

The float is expected to be the first of a series of debt issues as NDC has been given the go-ahead to borrow as much as P20 billion from the domestic capital market to fund major infrastructure projects.

In a memorandum to dealers of government securities, the Bureau of the Treasury said the bonds to be issued by the NDC will bear a five-year tenor.

The debt offering will be managed by Land Bank of the Philippines and Development Bank of the Philippines.

NDC's debt offering is backed by a government guarantee.

The NDC, whose primary task is to finance infrastructure projects, was tasked this year to tap private funds through the issuance of debt paper. The administration's economic managers had said it was about time the government put the focus on developing the country's infrastructure spending that its fiscal position has already improved, and that the budget deficit was expected to be wiped out by 2008.

The National Economic and Development Authority earlier said the government intends to focus its infrastructure spending to 4 percent of gross domestic product over the medium term.

Currently, infrastructure spending stands at only 2 percent, making the Philippines lag far behind its fourteen Asian counterparts.

Nods said Southeast Asian countries spend an average of 6 percent of their GDP on infrastructure.

Poor spending on infrastructure, largely attributed to the national government's budget woes since the onset of the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, has been largely blamed for a restrained economic growth.

A third of the government's annual budget is set aside for debt servicing, leaving just a meager amount for basic services and infrastructure.

The failure of Congress to pass the proposed 2006 national budget of P1.043 trillion, however, has put the Arroyo administration's pump priming program in jeopardy.

The government now works on a reenacted 2005 budget of only P914.619 billion.

Economic managers said the executive branch is expected to ask Congress for a supplemental budget to pump-prime spending programs.

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SEC mulls over giving Pacific license to sell

By Elizabeth L. Sarabia

THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE Commission is considering granting beleaguered pre-need firm Pacific Plans Inc. a license to sell securities.

"We are not actually considering granting them a license, but we have to make sure they are compliant with all the requirements before we can grant a license," SEC Commission Secretary Conrad Lekhan said.

Lekhan added, however, that the company has yet to complete its actuarial valuation report, which is one of the indicators of its ability to meet obligations.

A pre-need firm is granted a dealer's license based on a number of factors. These include adequacy of capital, ability to meet operating and future obligations, and qualified personnel.

PPI last month released P140 million to restore fee payments for school year 2006-2007 to holders of institutional education plans in line with the Makati Regional Trial Court's (RTC) recent approval of the SEC's rehabilitation scheme.

PPI president Alfredo C. Hon said around 9,000 plan holders will be receiving their checks via courier.

He added that all plan holders applying for benefits for school years 2006 to 2010 would be able to get back their original investment plus a minimum annual increment of anywhere from 1.66 percent to more than 2,000 percent.

Last April, the Makati RTC approved the rehabilitation of PPI together with a formula that would see money restore support from 2006 to 2019.

During school year 2005-2006, PPI released to 15,000 plan holders a total of P395 million in tuition fee payments.

As of May 31, 2006, holders of traditional plans, which many holders of full tuition fee payments regardless of amount.

New incentives rules on BOI projects up

By Rueras W. Domingo

REGISTRATION WITH THE Board of Investments no longer ensures tax perks as Malacañang recently adopted new rules in evaluating projects seeking incentives.

According to BOI officials, the departments of trade and of finance have agreed that BOI registration will not automatically lead to income tax holidays.

The agencies had been at odds on whether the granting of investment perks should be continued.

The Department of Trade and Industry—BOI's parent organization—said perks were essential for investors to flock within the BOI and perks redounded to billions of pesos in foregone revenues.

Data from the DOF showed that in 2003, the government lost some P900 billion in foregone revenues due to various tax exemptions provided through fiscal perks.

On the other hand, NGO data showed that between 1998 and 2002, the government was able to collect an average of P3.6 billion in taxes and P21 in export earnings for every peso of incentives.

Before the rules were changed, projects that were approved for billing as a pioneer project were qualified for a six-year tax holiday while non-pioneer projects were qualified for a four-year ITH.

Also, the evaluation of projects would now go through consultations with the BOI which would have a say on whether an ITH is recommended for a project.

However, the BOI said it will find the authority to override the DOF's recommendations.

Moreover, the DOF would not be provided with the names of prospective investors to evaluate projects based on the basis of the nature of the revenue enhancement involving cost, finance and location.

The new rules were issued as part of the government's drive toward fiscal consolidation, officials said.

The DOF has never been represented in the BOI although the DOF, along with the Mindanao Development Authority, used to be part of the team that formulated the Investment Priorities Plan every year.

Panganiban sees quick passage of Biofuels bill

BACOLOD CITY—AGRICULTURE Secretary Domingo Panganiban said last week he was confident the Senate would soon pass the Biofuels Bill with Sen. Edgardo Angara chairing the committee on energy.

Angara has taken over the committee chairmanship from Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr.-Santiago, who has gone on leave.

Panganiban said Angara fully supports the bill and was finalizing the contents of the Senate's version of the bioethanol bill for approval by the Upper House.

The passage of the Biofuels Act will open production of ethanol and open vast tracts of land to sugarcane production, Panganiban said.

The Biofuels Act will also focus on the development of upland areas and the countryside with the planting of jatropha, cassava trees and sugarcane for biofuels, he said.

The Sugar Regulatory Administration estimates that 200,000 hectares more will be planted to sugarcane to ethanol production on top of the 300,000 hectares already planted to sugar, he said.

For sweeter, Panganiban said half a million hectares would be needed in the next four years for 5 percent of the country's biofuel needs, and about 300,000 ha for 10 percent.

In fact, he said, Flying V was already selling 100 percent coco diesel. — Carla d'Oronzo, PDI
Hanyna Barrera

Finance taps ...

From page B1

cause from other government agencies or organizations that could help in cleaning the bureaucracy, he added.

The lifestyle checks conducted by BIR are focused mainly on officials and employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and of factions suspected of doing wrongs activities. Lifestyle checks are basically done by comparing income of a suspect with his or her assets.

Mendoza said that with the help of the BIR, BIR was aiming to charge before the Office of the Ombudsman at least 50 people suspected of corruption within a year.

Others to intensify the government crackdown on corruption followed the recent approval of a $20 million grant from the US government to address problems of corruption in the Philippine government.

The grant, which will be administered by Millennium Challenge Corp. (MCC) and disbursed in September, will be used to enhance the operations of the BIR and the Office of the Ombudsman. It will also boost the capability of the government's other anti-corruption programs like the Sin Also Tax Evaders (SIATE) and the Sun After Tax Evaders (SUSTE) and the Sun After the Smugglers (SUSTE).

While BIR wants corrupt government workers, BOC and BMD are intended to crack down on unscrupulous members of the private sector, particularly taxevaders and the smuggler.

Malacañang has committed to release P1 billion in counterpart funding for the government's anti-corruption programs to complement the US grant.

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Edited by Lito Magno

Cheaper rates contribute to growth of RP Internet cafés

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

THE INTERNET CAFE BUSINESS IN THE Philippines continues its growth, spurred by decreasing prices of broadband Internet and computer parts, as well as increasing demand for online and network gaming services.

A new report by the Philippine office of the International Data Corporation (IDC) also showed that Internet cafés are also finding niche markets catering to gaming, Internet use and sales centers for other value-added services such as telecommunications and printing.

The IDC report said most Internet cafés in the Philippines are still owner-only businesses or those that only have a few available computers with single ownership and only one branch.

Most of the value-added services of these cafés are document printing, scanning, fax and copying.

Likewise, the report said that these pay-to-use Internet cafés are still preferred by most casual users over owning home PCs especially as the cost of owning computers is still largely restrictive to most Filipinos.

IDC Philippines Research Manager Manuel Saenga said in a statement the new 12 months will see more Internet cafés concentrating heavily on maximizing or replacing present hardware coverage. These Internet cafés will also continue to focus on online gaming centers and basic Internet.

The IDC also reported that 49 percent of all Internet cafés surveyed were not changing their IT expenditures. Another 39 percent said there would be an increase in maintenance or replacement cost while 10 percent said there would be no change.

Saenga also added that Internet cafés in the rural areas should be taken into perspective to be able to access key business prospects.

"The decelerating broadband costs, growing uptake of online gaming, and declining hardware prices have all served as catalysts for growth in the Philippine and communication technology spending from the Internet café industry. In order to capture that potential business opportunity from the sector, the nature and preferences of the Internet cafés must be considered in all of these when addressing this particular market," Saenga said.

IDC also forecasts the arrival of new value added services from entrepreneurs, the access providers and the hardware providers as the Internet café business becomes a feasible one to address requirements of new markets.

Likewise, stiffer competition from other Internet cafés will also prompt owners to improve their services.

ALTHOUGH mobile Internet messaging promises a slew of new features on your cell phone, mobile developers say SMS will remain king in the Philippines for a few more years.

Mobile IM will not yet replace SMS, say developers

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

A COMMANY PLAYER AND A startup engaged in developing mobile services in the Philippines agreed that mobile instant messaging (IM) will not yet replace short messaging service (SMS). They said it would take at least two years before this new innovation in mobile messaging would take off in the country.

Chris Bustamante, chief operating officer of Chikka Asia Inc., the country's biggest provider of mobile Internet messaging services, said SMS will continue to dominate the mobile messaging market in the country.

"We're ready for it. But the Philippines is not yet ready," Bustamante said. "People will need to become comfortable with any new innovation to start using it."

It took SMS three to five years to become popular in the Philippines, according to Bustamante, vice president for technical operations of ES Systems Inc.

ES Systems developed Yehey!, a mobile phone Client for instant messaging which can be downloaded from the Internet.

Wilfredo Ada Cruz, president of ES Systems, said mobile IM is gaining more acceptance worldwide. Young operators, he added, are pushing this service as means to increase traffic on their networks.

More traffic means more revenues, Ada Cruz added.

The ES Systems executive said SMS is like today's e-mail. It allows people to communicate electronically but not in real-time. Mobile Internet messaging brings more convenience, he said.

"Mobile IM is like a chatlogger," he said. "But mobile IM is more than a chatlogger. It also comes with other features that will indicate the location or availability of each person talking."

Dela Cruz believes mobile IM could even replace voice calls using a mobile handset. Businessmen, however, said mobile IM will require new handsets equipped with a special software client.

"If it's embedded on a mobile phone client, it would be easier to use, then I think people will start using it. But right now, Filipinos are still using camera phones, for instance, to take and see share pictures," the Chikka executive said.

Chikka, however, has partnered with US-based FastMobile to provide mobile IM to its user subscribers.

Q3 Systems, on the other hand, revealed it is currently looking for more partners to use the Philippines to install its mobile phone client. So far, Mobile" has been downloaded in countries like India, Fiji, Singapore and Indonesia. It was also the software was made available on the Internet, according to Delgado. Mobile" was launched in December 2005.

Both local developers said more user-friendly services coupled with a push from local mobile phone operators would boost mobile IM usage in the Philippines.

Dela Cruz said local operators are still reluctant to embrace mobile IM.

"Why kill the goose that lays the golden egg?" he said, referring to the "typical" response he receives from local operators. He added efforts to promote more revenues out of SMS-based services.

The local operators will discuss the issue of mobile IM in the Philippines, added Dela Cruz. "This is part of the far-flung plans we have to undergo."

Photo developing shop adjusts to digital times

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

DIGITAL CAMERAS MAY HAVE RENDERED film-based cameras in the Philippines obsolete, but there is it also affecting photo developing shops which have seen nearly 10 percent of their business shifting from chain-based film developing to printing of photos from digital cameras and mobile phones.

Peter Dee, one of the biggest chains of photo developing shops in the country, has seen a 10 percent drop in its photo developing business as it was overtaken by the digital camera printing business.

Digney percent of their print jobs are from digital cameras while the remaining requests are for film printing. Three years ago, the ratio of their print business to digital was the opposite.

"There really has been a shift to digital photography, especially in urban areas where people have access to both the cameras and the printing shops. Some people would even have photos taken from their digital cameras printed in developing shops," according to Photoline Chief Operating Officer Amadeo Ong Ting.

A sharp decline in traditional film printing started two years ago when digital camera prices steadily dropped. Consumers of that time were also looking at digitally saving their photos instead of printing them.

Ting said their film business suffered because of the decline in film purchases. Digital camera owners opted to buy larger-capacity memory cards instead and have a select number of photos printed while the rest were saved in digital format for viewing on computers or mobile phones.

He said that in previous years, their shops were developing between 50 and 70 rolls of film per day but the advent of digital cameras reduced that back to just 20 per day.

Likewise, there has been a steady increase in home printing especially with the onset of cheaper home printers from the likes of HP and Epson with direct-to-print capabilities.

But despite the decline in their traditional business, Peter Dee Photoline has identified a steady growth in the last three years particularly due to the increase in printing requirements from digital camera owners.

"Often, digital camera owners print more photos than what they would from film. The cost of printing digital photos is also slightly higher; P7 for a 4R size photo against P4.50 for film," Ting said.

He added that most of their shops are located within malls and other business with a high traffic.

"I've noticed that some of the developing shops outside malls are less frequently visited as we customers are pressure to walk only to nearest convenience expensive to remote nursery," he said.

Ting also said that their shops have been upgrading their existing photo developing methods to accommodate digital photo printing. The old machines, which cost around P1.5 million, are no longer used with "carrier" machines that read digital photos and output these to a traditional film.

"We need to ensure that the photo developing business is still viable. The forecast is for the next five to 10 years until Filipinos would do home printing. That's still a long time for us to re-do our business model," Ting said.

NOWADAYS most shops sell digital cameras, not film-based ones, at their stores. Not only is the change being felt by the traditional film camera business; it is testing the film developing business as well.

Pinoy Stanford fellow dreams of high-tech Davao

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

FORMER YEHEY.COM CEO-founder and Pondahan.com investor Willy Ho is dreaming of a high-tech Davao City.

After spending nine months in Silicon Valley as a Stanford Digital Fellow Program fellow, Ho is back in the Philippines developing his home government and private sector groups transform this city into a "Silicon Valley."

Ho is said he went to Stanford to study how technology could help build a Silicon Valley in developing countries like the Philippines.

To do this, however, he needs to work with different stakeholders in the city. He is currently in discussions with the chamber of commerce in Davao City, ICT groups and the local government.

He has already initiated what he called "Silicon Dell" in Davao some of his daughter on making Davao City a tech hub.

"The larger objectives is to move forward the state of ICT in Davao City in various areas such as creation of job creation and innovation. The personal objectives is to assist the government, the chamber, and our pilot school with activities that will help improve academic-industry collaborations, IT promotions and research and development activities," he added. In an online chat with INQ7.net.

He's now working with an ICT Council in Davao. He also plans to collaborate with Ateneo de Davao University on possible academic-industry collaborations.

Perini his his as a fellow in Stanford University, Ramos has proposed to build a pipeline from open source software conceptualization to deployment, training in university's information technology and entrepreneurship programs, to commercialization by us, empowerment within the technical."

He hopes to replace brain drain of information technology skilled workers by improving the ICT capacity of the Philippines.

Now, he hopes to apply this newfound knowledge in Davao City.

"I have my heart set to improving my hometown. Davao has so much potential, and our graduates are doing well in Cebu, Manila and overseas. With the world flattening, it doesn't matter so much now where a company is located in Manila or elsewhere," he said.

Ramos admitted getting everyone to cooperate in this ambitious project a challenge.

"It's going to be a journey (thanks for mind of my career, I still have to let) my way through in the best way of getting things done in Davao," he added.

Ramos is currently the chief technology officer of Multipoint Interactive, a Philippine-based web development company.

Design software could boost construction industry productivity

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA—Despite being among the most established vertical industries worldwide, the construction business remains slow in adopting new methods to improve productivity, causing delays in finishing buildings and overhead costs.

Many construction companies have also suffered both from small internal losses due to lack of collaboration between architects, builders, utilities companies and materials suppliers as they find design flaws that become evident only in during construction.

The problem is also aggravated by the growing need to construct more buildings as the world's population grows, which is predicted to reach 9 billion by 2050, up from its current 6 billion people.

Autodesk Vice President of industry strategy and solutions Philip Bernstein said builders are hard-pressed to improve the quality of their work because the pace of construction of new buildings particularly because most companies in this industry are still using the traditional pen-and-paper method of creating designs, as well as long processes of submitting and reviewing construction documents.

Because of time constraints, many builders are forced to start construction and find out the flaws as they go along. Bernstein said delays cause an average of 10 percent loss in the total construction investment.

"This is highly inefficient and very risky because finding design flaws after the construction is underway jeopardizes the progress and people have to go back and forth with their partners to find out how to resolve these problems," he said.

In a few cases, some architectural companies have been leveraging software into their businesses, using technology to digitally design buildings that can be viewed and analyzed prior to construction.

Bernstein noted that the Freedom Tower, conceptualized as a memorial to the victims grounds of the infamous 9/11 attacks on Twin Towers in New York City was constructed and analyzed completely in digital formats.

It took only less than a year to digitally design the Freedom Tower, complete with all of the necessary office space allocations, commercial establishments, electrical, air-conditioning and plumbing services.

Architects from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), designers of the Freedom Tower, used 3D modeling and rendering software to create the new building. It also featured a simulated walkthrough of the first few floors of the building, as well as the roads and park surrounding it.

"SOM was able to construct this building, as well as other new buildings, using digital software. They never actually set foot in the world to create and see the first architectural features, which have been the basis for today's AutoCAD," Bernstein said.

SOM Director Darren Riley said the construction of the new building would have taken more than a year to finish and it would now likely be just a few months, thanks to the precise design.

"But we didn't count the man hours that would have been saved to design the building. What we were trying to resolve was the overall process of collaborating with our business partners. We wanted our partners to be directly part of the design stage and ensure that all possible problems that could be encountered during construction or structural failure laying down the first block," Riley said.

Riley added that the quality of work also improved when they started design software to construct new buildings.

"Because of our architects have over-used digital software in completely erase some of the parts of the building," he said.

Riley added that Building Information Modeling (BIM) was a major step forward improving productivity. BIM ensures that every part of designing a building has to be done and analyzed for technical details prior to the construction process. In single component is missing, it is possible that integrate designs for structural, electrical and utilities network implementation.

"In the Freedom Tower design,

ARTIST'S digital rendition of the Freedom Tower, conceptualized and planned to record time using design software.

BIM made us can supplies and partners collaborate effectively and avoid wasting time on printing and reviewing designs to be developed in the construction," Riley said.

Riley said the BIM's effect is evident in the design of the 1776-floor tall Freedom Tower, which started construction April this year and is projected to be finished by 2011.

He added that they would also be using the same concepts in all of their upcoming designs, including the Burj Dubai building in United Arab Emirates, touted to be the world's tallest building after its construction.

Riley said that while BIM is new in the construction business, it will be a major business among architecture companies.

"Eventually, engineers will move their designs to software to make it easier for them," he said.

US to open up Guam, Hawaii for RP mangos

By Christine A. Gaylican

PHILIPPINE EXPORTERS WILL HAVE A BIT OF A head start over other countries in the United States when American authorities begin to allow the shipment of products to Guam and Hawaii in August.

Mangoes from all over the country, except for those grown in Bataan, will be allowed entry to the US territories – something that exporters consider to be a step forward for Philippine trade.

According to US Department of Agriculture Director for Agriculture Trade Office Dennis Shisler, the developments would give local exporters a boost.

The USDA said in other city mangos from Guimaras can be shipped to the territories.

Shisler's pair in an interview on Friday that acceptance of the products in the US mainland will depend on the "experimental shipments" that will commence with the delivery of 5,000 mangos.

He also said that the USDA has earmarked $1 million for pest risk analysis on Philippine mangos.

"The results of the pest risk analysis will be the basis for which US quarantine authorities will approve or deny the Philippines' request to allow mango producers outside of Guimaras island to export the tropical fruit to the US," Shisler said.

In 2003, the USDA for the first time allowed the Philippines to export about 220 metric tons (MT) of fresh mangos to the US.

Only mangos grown in Guimaras island were allowed to be marketed.

The Philippines hopes to break the load record it has on the $300 million US market.

On a rainy day, RP may draw on $4B

ILAYA= COM DIGS
A tarsier nest down of Laguna town, Bapan, made exhibitions possible. Interest as high, at least of wires made from sugar cane, which goes for P35 a bottle. Dividers of the wires seem to the potency of the native bees.

New IMF facility to aid emerging economies in times of crisis

By Doris C. Dumlao

ASSESSING A GREATER ROLE IN helping emerging economies handle potential external shocks, the International Monetary Fund will soon come up with a new emergency facility that may give the Philippines about $4 billion in fresh buffer fund — if and when a crisis strikes.

In an interview over the weekend, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo welcomed the IMF's proposed funding scheme for emerging markets, but said that the country has no need for it at this time.

"The IMF is correct in trying to put up a quick disbursing front-ended type of assistance," Guinigundo said.

According to visiting IMF deputy managing director Takatoshi Kato, "today's benign situation in global financial markets should not lull us into thinking that the risk of financial crises is past."

During a seminar at the Asian Institute of Management last week, Kato said that the IMF is looking at a new facility that will assist emerging economies in times of financial crises by giving them easier access to IMF financing, complementing bilateral and multilateral currency swap deals under the Chiang Mai initiative among Asian countries.

Asked whether the IMF is proposing a crisis in the near future — as indicated by its effort to draw up plans for a new contingent financing scheme — Kato said: "My answer under a prudent scenario: the future ... What we can do is to prepare for that adverse change of economics."

According to an IMF briefing paper, the new instrument is supposed to be made available to member countries with strong macroeconomic policies, sustainable debt and transparent reporting, but are still facing balance sheet weaknesses.

The new installments, to be disbursed in the new IMF-World Bank annual meeting in Singapore in September, proposes access of up to 300 percent of a country's quota, automatically available in a single, up-front disbursement, and could involve increased upon subsequent review.

Such automatic country of the IMF is assigned a quota, based broadly on its relative size in the world economy. The quota determines its maximum financial commitments to the IMF and its voting power, and has a bearing on its access to IMF financing.

The Philippines' quota with the IMF currently stand at 473.8 million special drawing rights (SDR), equivalent to about $713 billion (1 SDR = $1.4974, according to the IMF website. This quota implies that the country may avail of $1.9 billion or more if the IMF deems that the country deserves such assistance.

The country's outstanding debt with the IMF has now gone down to only $100.7 million, or 21.7 percent of its quota.

Monetary Board makes it easy for auditors to check on banks

THE PHILIPPINE MONETARY BOARD has fine-tuned the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (central) regulation on financial reporting that will give external auditors more leeway to complete their audit work on Philippine banks.

The MB last Thursday approved an amendment to the manual of banking regulations to allow banks to submit their financial audits in just within 120 days after each calendar year, BSP managing director for supervision and examination Jaime Tinsingco told reporters on Friday.

The amendment will allow external auditors to do more flexible, giving them the opportunity to complete their audit work early on.

The old regulation stated that the audit should commence within 30 days from the end of each calendar year and the report must be submitted to the bank in the BSP 90 days after the audit started.

"For larger banks, the auditor wants work even before the year ends so, under the old regulation, it would mean that the financial audit report would have to be submitted even before the end of the year being audited," Tinsingco said.

"For example, the auditor started on Sept. 1 ... If he has 90 days to submit a report, it means the report must be in by end of November" Tinsingco said. "Now can you do that within your calendar year ends Dec. 31?"

He said the new regulation would then allow auditor pressure on external auditors, and give them the chance to choose to start much early or even before the end of the calendar year.

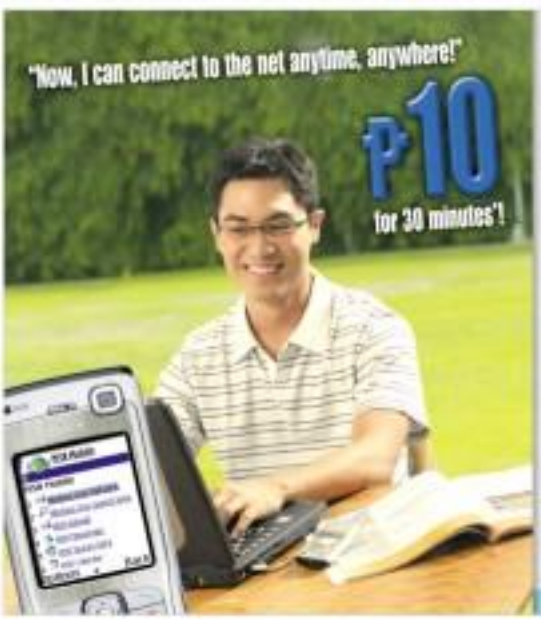
Tinsingco said the MB also approved provisions on financial reporting by local branches of foreign banks.

"The old requirement stated that the 75 percent audit report should be approved or moved by [the bank's] board of directors before it was submitted to the BSP," Tinsingco said.

But in the case of local branches of foreign banks, the members of the bank board are not here, Tinsingco added.

She said that the MB cleared things up by allowing the financial audit report of a foreign bank's local branch to be noted by the country manager.

Doris C. Dumlao



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PSALM may not meet privatization targets

10 plants scheduled for bidding in '06 but not a single unit has been sold so far

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) is unlikely to meet its privatization targets this year through 2006.

The agency has targeted to sell through bidding 10 power plants this year. But to date, PSALM has not sold even a single plant.

According to the latest status report on the implementation of RA 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, PSALM had planned to privatize two coal-fueled power plants, the 112-MW Pagbilao unit and the 300-MW Unit Mak-ban geothermal facilities package.

PSALM also aims to bid out the Cebu plant last September but the bidding was declared a failure when bidders First Generation Luzon Power Corp. and DMCI Holdings Inc. failed to meet the $200-million reserve price for the plant. The unit was owned and operated by the Cadenas.

The privatization body had also planned bid invitations for the Malaya-gan-Mauraway and Tiwi-Makban plant packages, but it has yet to set firm bidding dates.

For the second semester, PSALM plans to sell the 200 MW Manila thermal and the 225-MW Batan thermal plants, both decommissioned, as well as the 2x63 MW Magat hydropower facility, 620-MW Ilijan combined cycle plant and 114-MW Bajac 1 and 11 diesel fired generation facility.

Bid invitations for the Bilaan facility had been released, but the bidding date has yet to be finalized.

PSALM had also invited investors of some decommissioned assets last year, but those were likewise declared failed bidding. This prompted the privatization body to get a third-party appraisal for the power plants.

The Negotiated privatization process recently hit a snag when TSN Pacific Consortium Inc., the winning bidder for the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired power plant in Zambales, failed to deliver the $227 million down payment for the plant on the latest deadline.

The winning bidder was given up to Aug. 6, the end of the 30-day grace period before contract termination, to make the payment to keep the deal alive.

In March, Malaysian conglomerate Bantili Berhad became TSN's new Consortium, eventually offering to buy out its 70% partners for $8 billion.

The main condition for the consummation of the negotiations, however, was a power supply deal with the Lopez-led Manila Electric Co., the country's biggest power distributor.

But TSN negotiators failed to get Meralco to enter into a supply agreement with it, even after months of negotiations.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, also a member of the PSALM board, advised the privatization body to forge a power supply contract with power distributors before auctioning off any more plants.

CHANGING ROLE OF IMF IN ASIA. Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. (4th from L) led the panel-members during the International Monetary Fund forum on the changing role of the IMF in Asia. IMF deputy managing director Takatoshi Kato (3rd from L), in his remarks, cited the Philippines for the significant progress made in the area of economic reforms. With the BSP chief and Mr. Kato are (from L) IMF resident representative Piyaa Bugo-Nantharat Treasurer Gomar Cruz, Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila and IMF senior adviser Sean Nolan.

BOI OKs ₱650-M feed production venture of SMC

By Rainier M. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE ANIMAL feeds mill project of San Miguel Corp.'s poultry business unit was approved for registration by the Board of Investments.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez said San Miguel Foods Inc. would be building the mill to produce feeds for its own requirement and lease to feed supply in the local market.

BOI data showed that SMFI's factory would start operation with a production capacity of 21,120 bags or 50 kilograms bags of feeds per year.

The mill's production capacity would be upgraded gradually to 4.22 million bags of feeds by the fourth year of operations.

Its cost is put at ₱650 million which covered the necessary permits from relevant government agencies. It also had developed the site and started work on the building and machinery.

Hernandez said the project was represented registered on-layer equipment, which had been delivered, tested and being prepared for commissioning.

The feed mill is scheduled to start commercial operations at full capacity in January 2007.

Meanwhile, also a unit the BOI's managing head, said nine other projects worth a total of P200 million were approved for registration in the past two months.

These included Shintech Korea Inc.'s ₱9.06-million project involving bag cutting and processing to meet the supply needs of a sister firm, USP Distribution Corp.'s ₱6.5-million venture in making 160 low-cost housing units in Imus, Cavite; and Fats Builders Supply Corp.'s P60.7-million manufacturing project in Bulacan.

Other were Bacgain Enterprise Corp.'s ₱12.1-million fruits and vegetable processing plant in Davao; Small Philippines Inc.'s ₱19.6-million expansion plant in Mandaluyong City; Monterge Resources Philippines Corp.'s ₱19 million plan to explore for copper and gold in Bangkuran, Ilocos Apayao; Ecosphere Inc.'s ₱8.5-million P7.4-million software development project, and two expansion projects for garment production—P36 Apparel Manufacturing Corp.'s ₱2.1-million project and Hospel Textiles International Corp.'s ₱1.2-million venture.

One Voice vs Sigaw

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honorio C. General

AT LAST, A GROUP I CAN SEE WITH IN THE fight over Charter change has surfaced. As soon as I read the full-page ad of One Voice, I downloaded its position paper from its website. After reading it, I phoned Wilson Macapagal, who was overjoyed to know that I wanted to sign up.

On Thursday, I went to Ilocos to stop Dennis Garcia's protest. This drew a sharp editorial immediately from Inquirer. Apparently, I would not have spoken ill of Garcia's protest were it not for the money to spend in Sigaw ads. Certainly, it could not have been raised from the 6 million people who declared their support for me.

As a non-insurance broker, I cannot discuss the constitutional questions on the initiative. I leave such esoteric debates to Father Quin. I prefer to stick to the practical issues.

I have several very objections to the 10-bill. My reasons for this have taught me to practice in Naga, Manila, Cebu, Davao. For the past 30 years, I have cast my ballot in Makati. In an election nowadays, I have to present my voter's ID to the public school teachers manning my precinct. If I do not have it against their voter's registry, I am given a ballot to fill up. When I turn in my ballot, I sign my name on the registry. I also stamp my right thumb mark on the registry and on the stub of the ballot. Finally, I have to suffer the minority of having my thumb marked with indelible ink.

When the precinct closes, the counting begins. The stubs and the ballots are accounted for. The votes are tallied manually and recorded, for all to see, in a large scroll. The canvass, the party representatives and the Bonded organizations are present.

The precinct-level results are sent by mail or municipio for canvassing. Then each town or city sends the canvass results to the provincial capitol for the provincial canvass, results of which are sent to Manila for the national canvass. Only then is the winner proclaimed.

The election code prescribes this complicated procedure to elect our national leaders. And the entire process is under the watchful eyes of the Comelec.

Sigaw claims that a proposal to curb shocking or changing our form of government from a bicameral presidential to a unicameral parliamentary system needs only to be approved by a majority of registered voters all over the country on a form designed by no government agency for voters. It is required of the opposition. No government agency, certainly not the Comelec, is needed to supervise the exercise.

This is the so-called people's initiative. Sigaw, therefore wants the Sigaw to persuade the signatures to Comelec for verification.

Let us say, aside for a while the Supreme Court's decision prematurely registering the Comelec from even entertaining Sigaw's initiative. Let us even assume that there are no legal obstacles to the people's initiative.

Just exactly how will Comelec authenticate 9 million signatures? How will the Comelec get the 9 million real spontaneous signatures against which the 9 million Sigaw signatures will be verified? How many "auxiliary agents are there in Comelec? Even if by spontaneously experts of the United States and the National Police and the NBI are assigned to help Comelec, the authentication process will take forever to finish.

Finally, Sigaw was supposed to have gathered signatures from every barangay, without exception. Well, no signatures were gathered in my barangay. If I have to submit a means of fidavit to the Comelec to this effect, I will.

My guess is Sigaw does not have the numbers. Otherwise, what is holding them from presenting the signatures to the Comelec?

Sigaw claims that the 10-bill initiative will prevail. Then, we will be on the road to real reform.

Phinma unit readies stock rights issue

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CORDILLERA DEVELOPER PHINMA Property Holdings Corp., a unit of Philippine Investment Management (Phinma) Inc., is eyeing ₱126 million or fresh capital through a stock rights issue in the fourth quarter (the year).

Phinma chair Oscar Hilado told Phinma and its flagship company Surnonen Consolidated Industries Inc. had secured the approval of their respective boards for their participation in the issue.

By exercising their rights to participate in the stock rights offer, Phinma and Surnonen will get the first crack at the shares to be issued by PPHC.

Phinma owns 60 percent of PPHC while Surnonen holds 16 percent. The remaining 1 percent is held by the public.

Hilado said Phinma Property Group is looking at a possible initial public offering for PPHC in the next three years.

PPHC will use the proceeds from its stock rights issue to finance three new condominium projects: a 750-unit condominium in Baguio, a similar condominium project in Iloilo, and an annex to its Spanish-themed condominium in Quezon City, which has 300 units. This will add to Phinma's 657 units.

Revenues from PPHC and Surnonen's other subsidiary, Union Galvanized Corp., had helped Phinma's earnings in the first half to ₱712 million from P66 million in the same period last year.

Industries is planning to acquire new universities in the provinces and the power plants that will be privatized by the government.

It is considering building a geothermal in the Tiwi-Makban geothermal plant and the Bauang and Cobra coal-fired plants.

GOINGS-ON

SME Center

THE CHINESE GENERAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE will inaugurate the first-ever Small and Medium Enterprise Center in the country on July 17.

The center is one of the highlights of the country's celebration of the 108th Declaration Week on July 17-22.

The center's inauguration will be followed by the "Manila International Fair," which will showcase Manila merchants, and an entrepreneurship (EBM) activities with a series of seminars and training.

Panasonic's marketing seminar

PANASONIC MANUFACTURING PHILIPPINES Corp. will hold a seminar on basic marketing and key account management on July 20 to 21 at its main office in Laguna Plaza.

Sponsored by the Foundation for Asian Management Development (FAMD), the seminar is aimed at helping participants align their business with their brand building program. PMPC is a Japan-based organization that assists SMEs in Asia in upgrading their management development capabilities.

Media Atlas initiative

SYNOVATE, A LEADING GLOBAL MARKET research company, announced that its subsidiary, Media Atlas, has launched its first Philippine media survey that will provide insights to media owners, ad and media agencies, and ultimately, even Senator Manila, covering the latest choices of most relevant to marketers, media specialists and media owners.

An advisory panel, composed of media specialists and major advertisers, will assist Synovate for a media survey that will capture a complete across section of the target social groups.

"This is a major step ahead for our industry, which has been starved of good media information about the choices, purchasing powers and media habits of consumers, reliably within the Greater Manila area," the advisory panel's retiring chair Javier Jose Cuisia said.

Gov't hybrid rice program seen losing participants

FARMERS ARE DROPPING OUT OF the government's rice program amid the use of hybrid seed variety failure and a controversial subsidy scheme involving a loan seed supplier.

A study of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) showed that the Department of Agriculture's Hybrid Rice Commercialization Program (HRCP) was losing farmer-participants at an alarming rate.

"Around 88 to 78 percent of the farmers have beneficiaries immediately stopped using the hybrid rice subsidy-program after only one (cropping) season or after six months," said the PIDS study which covered 17 provinces implementing the HRCP.

This was apparently because the program did not do much to increase rice yields.

The 2005 study of the Southeast Asian Regional Institute for Community Development (Seariden) showed that of four provinces using the hybrid variety, only Nueva Ecija registered some harvest increase.

The hybrid rice variety posted performances inferior to the traditional local inbred variety Swallow seed.

The HCRP is supposed to be the inputs component of a central price program for food sufficiency.

The program came under fire from several major international companies due to its preferred supplier subsidy program. Groups claimed that it was giving the subsidy to only one supplier was "price distorting."

The program was also criticized by one of the country's biggest farmer groups. The North Luzon Farmers' Federation (Nafafa) and the Federated Rice Traders Multipurpose Cooperatives (NFTRC) had asked the DA to review the quality of the hybrid rice seeds being distributed under the program.

The NFTRC expressed concern that the poor performances of the hybrid rice variety might be due to the quality of seeds distributed by the seed supplier.

Former leader and NFTRC chair Melany Ilagan urged the DA to look into the because the hybrid rice program's acceptability and credibility might be adversely affected by the quality of the seeds being distributed by the lone seed supplier.

Remittances sent via informal channels declining

By Doris C. Dumlao

OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) are known shipping past banking channels have gone down to 3.6 percent of the total inflows, or by around $1.6 billion last year, due to local banks' aggressive efforts to corner the bulk of the cash transfer business, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas estimated.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo, in a told reporters on Friday that based on latest government surveys, some OFWs were now remitting their remittances through banks. In comparing the country's balance of payments, he said the BSP was now estimating that OFW remittances routed through informal channels amounted to only 10 percent.

Only last year, the BSP estimated in the BOP that 26 percent of the OFW remittances came in through informal channels, defined as unlicensed or unregulated operations. This assumption is considered conservative if compared with the 26-30 percent shown in various surveys.

OFW inflows in the country, including cash sent through the informal channels, hit $11.5-billion last year.

The BSP assumed that remittances entered through informal channels had gone down to 15 percent last last year, and further down to the 13 percent assumption early this year but it later decided to slash the rate further to 10 percent as more millions were now being captured by the banks.

Based on the latest estimates, the annual OFW remittance leakages to flows sent in informal channels had gone down from as high as $1.5-$1.95 billion last year to only about $1.1 billion.

The developed as Philippine banks continued to strengthen their capacity to handle cash transfers from the overseas market. For instance, BCBC Multibank Investment arm of the Rockefeller Bond Commercial Banking Corp., inked on 19-day's strategic partnership with US-based Travelex Money Transfer (TMT)—the firm has international remittance provider to the ocean deposit, home delivery and mobile phone remittances in the Philippines.

Through the tie-up with TMT and its local representative, Asian FX Money Exchange, DPR beneficiaries can receive their TMT remittances at any of the 178 business centers of BCBC, said BCBC senior vice president and Telemoney Group head Cynthia Ramos.

BCBC Multibank offers cash transfer services through over 500 remittance centers, agents and its ops in 34 countries with high OFW populations.

BCBC is among the country's top five players in the remittance business. Others in leading places are Bank of the Philippine Islands, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Philippine National Bank and Equitable PCIBank.

A study of the Asian Development Bank released last as of last year, about 38 percent of the recipients in the Philippines preferred the informal method, primarily due to faster transaction costs.

Another previous study on the Philippine remittance showed that remittances held as deposits in the banking system had a beneficial multiplier effect, of between two to three times as these could be channeled to investments in the form of credit and other intermediation. As such, the BSP is promoting the use of formal banking channels to a safer and more productive cash remittance system for millions of Filipinos working abroad.

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- Manila Polo Club faces defilement /D1

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Bulosan-Pantoja
Editorial Editor Gina B. Zulueta

Well-deserved tribute to Joya

By Gina Dominguez
Cover Baser

THREE YEARS AFTER HIS proclamation as National Artist for the Visual Arts, which came eight years after his death, José T. Joya is finally getting a well-deserved tribute.

Organized by the Association for Philippine-China Understanding (Apec), in cooperation with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the National Museum of the Philippines, the exhibit, "Tribute to José T. Joya" (Synthesizing Silliness) Hall, Museum of the Filipino People, National Museum, Agrifina Circle, until July 30), puts together the artist's prodigious output of over four decades.

His struggles and fun as an abstract expressionist, as well as the artistic and commercial success he reaped in the last decade of his life,

WILL CORRIDO (C)

"MAKAlbaroan"

"CITIES of the Past"

Arturo Luz: Streamlining Philippine art

By Cid Reyes
Cover Baser

2006 IS AN AUSPICIOUS year for contemporary Philippine art. In November, one of the last remaining giants from that Golden Age of Philippine art is celebrating his 80th year—a milestone by any standard.

Elder art luminary National Artist Arturo Luz remains to be the premier artist in the country, mastering the various mediums of painting, sculpture, printmaking, collage, photography and jewelry.

Smart manager, his career is management: curatorial owner of the eponymous, longest-running art gallery (40 years till its closure in 2003); executive director of Design Center, the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Philippine Art. This is the artist who has dedicated "I'm a workhorse. I don't know what vacations or weekends are."

Reminiscent of a distinctive style and sensibility, Luz gained early recognition since his first solo show in 1955 at the Manila Hotel, an exhibition organized by the artist's own mother, the late, well-respected interior decorator Rosario Olivarejos Luz. The show consisted of works brought by her son from his years of education in the US and sojourns in Europe.

It was in that show that Luz first met the so-called "neo-realists," Vicente Manansala, Hernando Ocampo, Cesar Legaspi, Romeo Tabuena, Reuben Rimbo and Victor Oteyza. The label, which really subscribes to the idea of modernism, came from critic-painter Emilio Aguilar Cruz.

In 1953, barely a year after his re-

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MALL EVENTS THIS JULY

stmall Festival Alabang
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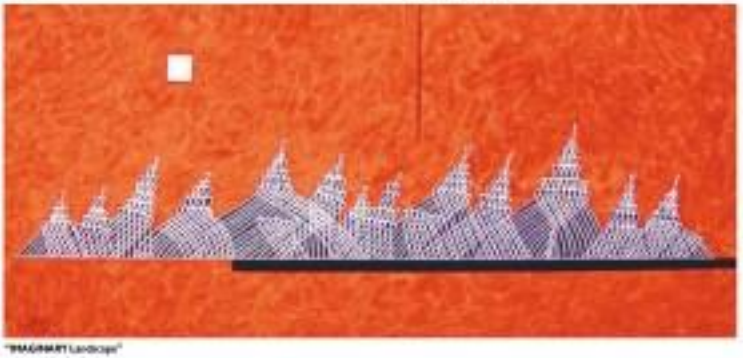
July 22 Rocksteady Wall Tour, 2/L, 4 pm
July 23 Mandaluyong City Chess Tournament, 2/L, 10 am
July 25 Taekwondo Demonstration, 2/L, 4 pm
July 28 Bayanik Bodies Mall Tour, 2/L, 4 pm
July 29 Rachelle Ann Go Mall Tour, 2/L, 4 pm
July 30 Mark Bautista Mall Tour, 2/L, 4 pm
Tuesdays, Stand up Comedy @ Cuba Libre, 9 pm
Fridays & Saturdays, Live Bands @ Cuba Libre, 9 pm

Metropolis Star Alabang
Tel. 850-3845

July 22 Bayanik Bodies Album Tour, 2/L, 4 pm
July 23 Mark Bautista Album Tour, 2/L, 4 pm
July 29 Basketball Shootout featuring PBA Player, 2/L
July 30 Starland Singing Star Showdown, 4/L, 4 pm
Mondays, Live Bands @ Marks Bar, 2/L, 8 pm
Tuesdays, Acoustic Nights @ the Activity Area, 2/L, 5 pm
Thursdays, Stand up Comedy @ Marks Bar, 2/L, 8 pm
Sundays, Audition Nights @ the Activity Area, 2/L, 7 pm

stmall Festival Alabang
Tel. 872-5249

July 17- 23 Schoolastic @ Books for Less, G/F, 10 am
July 28- 30 MyEpa Trade Fair, 2/L, 10 am
Mondays & Saturdays, Comedy Nights @ The Strip, 7 pm
Tuesdays, Ballroom Nights @ Marks Sports Bar, 7 pm
Wednesdays, Live Bands @ The Strip, 7 pm



"IMAGINARY Landscape"

"TWO CHAIRS: Two Jugglers"

"WHITE Temples, India"

Arturo Luz: Streamlining . . .

From page C1

"IMAGINARY Landscape"

"SACRED Temples"

cival from abroad, Luz won first prize in the annual competition of the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP).

The prize-winning work was "Bagong Yaon," a painting inspired by the sight of a cyclist, with two friends in tow. To animate the essentially still image, Luz added the rotating horn. In retrospect, this landmark minimal painting prefigures the future classic works of Luz: the translucent and perforated series of linear cyclist and spectators.

Indeed, if any influence on Luz could be ascribed to the Neo-Realists, it is the choice of subject matter: the hot-cop having or spectator theories and the vendor image. Among the early works are "Los Barriachos," an interesting synthetic depiction of an aftermath of a drinking spree; "Lavanderes" and "Skipping Rope." Already evident in the delineation of the human figure was the tendency toward attenuation and stylization, both in the service of simplification, while marshalling the rigor of line. The young Luz had always admired the works of Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo.

Still life

Another fascination was the still life, as consignment of various objects to space. In particular, Luz favored the stark shapes of bottles with their cognate forms. Later in the '60s, the artists explored ancient pottery, ewers, jars, pitchers, bowls and cups.

These would comprise the "Object of the Past" series. All these works were informed by reductivist spirit, reducing shapes into their essences.

Through the decades, Luz sustained the virtual qualities now enshrined in the canon of his art: economy of line, elegance and precision of design, a delicate balance between tension and harmony, an internal rhythm within a complex composition, muted exhibitionism over emotional content, a cool distillation despite a plentitude of improvisations; and a demonized will to error. Black and white accolades, enlivened only by hues found at the opposite end of the spectrum—royal reds and golds alternating with mustard yellows, cadmium browns, and burnished ochers.

All these qualities are anchored on a guiding intelligence and an austere sensibility variously described by critics as "meticulous," "enigmatical," and "cerebral."

What, in fact, Luz has succeeded in doing is to streamline Philippine art, with its predilection for baroque and rococo shapes and all the concentric colors of the rainbow.

To streamline is to make simpler and more efficient, by stripping an object or image of its nonessentials, in order to achieve a compact and integrated design. This is the synopsis of literature as exemplified by the art of Arturo Luz.

Regard, for instance, the very major series of "Celebration" and "Cities of the Past."

"Celebration" is a figure-scape of jugglers and acrobats, a starkly joyous formula still life. "The Executive" is fetishism, with each performer pointedly placed in space, but always in relation to the whole, resulting in a syncopated intersection, governed always by an invisible grid.

With magisterial grandeur, the subject of the "Cities of the Past" series inevitably came to the artist's life as an opportune and predestined line.

Asian sojourn

With his work accomplished as the three government institutions which he headed, Luz embarked on an Asian sojourn in 1988. He visited the ancient temple sites of Asia: Borobudur in Indonesia; Sukhothai, the original capital of Thailand; mighty Ava in Cambodia; and Taj in India.

Impressed by the grandeur of the Asian temples and places, the artist started to translate and transform their architecture by transcending the literal reality of recital stone. This he achieved within his basic frameform, outlined in the sky tightness of a multitude of lines, each one rising upon the other in sequential procession, until, at the apex, the looming structure is crowned by a dome or cupola. This is architectural panorama as a potent visual theme.

What connects the airiness of the grid lines are the collaged pieces of paper, crumpled to a fat surf-resistible, spread and pasted lightly on the canvas surface, and then evenly brushed with pigment of gold and red, which flood and seep through the torn cracked, lace-like ground. The effect is strikingly rich and luminously opulent, decidedly conspicuous touch to the otherwise severe and austere Luz style.

From the 80, Arturo Luz shows no sign of retiring from painting, illumed with unfailing good health, he continues to work prodigiously. Indeed, he belongs to the tradition of long-lived artists—Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Miro and, of course, our very own Anita Magsaysay-Ho—and is come to mind—whose creativity continues to be expressive the autumn of their lives. Certainly that it must be celebrated.

Happy birthday, Mr. Luz!

(The artists are written by the author in conjunction with the exhibition "Temples, Architectures & Cities of the Past" ongoing at Galerie Joaquin Manila until July 26. Galerie Joaquin Manila is at 377 P. Guevarra St. cor. Montemar Ave., Addition Hills, San Juan, with tel. nos. 7228333 to 7228418, e-mail galerie_joaquin2003@yahoo.com or visit www.galeriejoaquin.com.)

Well-deserved tribute to Joya

From page C1

are documented through his works together by his sister, Josie Balbontin, and a number of collectors, friends and friends.

The pillar of modern art in the country pursued his calling in a steadfast, consistent and truly audacious manner. Through four decades, beginning in the 1950s, Joya matured his art, exploring its full potential from a medium of representation to modernism. In time, he transformed it into a personal iconography of abstract expressionism.

Joya first gained prominence when he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1953, from the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts, magna cum laude, the first to have earned such a distinction from the state university's Fine Arts college.

A year before his graduation, he had won five prize in the Art Association of the Philippines annual contest, for his oil painting "Approaching Storm," a work that prefigured his obsessive and unrelenting energy and dynamism.

Lasting impressions

Having aligned himself with the modernism who prevailed around the Philippine Art Gallery, he was caught in the transition between traditionalist ancient and modernist friends. As with his peers, the existing flames of intellectualism in modern art had fanned his imagination, enflaming his passion beyond words.

In 1956, he took up Design Studies at the University of Santo Tomas. After completing his studies, he received a travel grant from the Spanish government to return de Cultura Hispanica. His European experience left lasting impressions from the places he visited and on his images that eventually found their way into his oeuvre.

As can be gleaned from the newspaper, Joya soon became a staunch disciple of the school of Abstract Expressionism with Jackson Pollock and the New York School as its major proponents.

Having been awarded a Fulbright-Smith Mundt scholarship to the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan to study his master's degree, he was thrust into the artistic ferment and spirit of experimentation pervading the movement.

It was at this point in his career that his style began to evolve, with impastoed shapes, reverberating jewel-like forms that gleamed from within and in the same time reflected the all-pervasive light.

A second trip to the United States in 1967, as scholar of the John D. Rockefeller III Fund and later of the Ford Foundation, gave him the opportunity to study at the Pratt Institute for Printmaking. He decided to study there for two years.

On his way home, he toured Europe, visiting art centers in the various cities of the continent. It was during this trip that he indulged in his other passion...drawing—which has been documented in his rare books of drawings, the first in 1971, and the second, "Joya on Joya," in 1999.

It was on the '70s when Joya would reach the primacy of design in excellent art, a style that would lead him to explore indigenous forms and expressions. This personification would find fruition in collage using rice paper with acrylic.

The resulting oeuvre revealed "multilayered, overlapping spaces, punctuated with obscure tropical hues, and with sensational use of monochromatic and neutral colors."

This is best exemplified by the rare piece "Buena Muerte," a 1974 oil painting.

Greatest challenge

It was also in the 1970s that Joya found himself engaged in a variety of media and forms, ranging from ceramic designs and figure sketches to oil and acrylic paintings.

But he found the greatest challenge in abstraction, where, as the critic Alice Guillermo wrote, "he probes into emotional significations of color with hues as terse in a vocabulary for expressing moods, nuances of feeling and inner states, while thoroughly pursuing artistic concepts, problems and values."

Joya was equally involved in numerous outreach programs that promoted exchanges of innovations, including that of the Association for Philippine-China Understanding, now headed by his sister Josie. He propagated art consciousness among the masses, bringing art to depressed urban areas, helping form art groups across the country, such as Cebu, Iloilo and Bacolod, under the Art Association of the Philippines.

This culture event definitely succeeded. It clearly intended to give Joya his rightful place as a towering figure in Philippine art. Having laid the foundations for an expressive and powerful modern art, he articulated its power, dynamism and vitality, an icon that continues to inspire and be emulated by succeeding generations of artists.

"SPACE Transfiguration," by Jose Joya

"GLOBAL Warming," by Joya

Bacolod artist

An emerging artist from Bacolod City who soaked up in the artistic ambience of Jose Joya's era, Jose Miguel Mo. Montinola had spent time in Dumaguete, Iloilo, Cebu, Manila, Bacolod, and Bacolod City, where he is currently living. He is a graduate of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts in Diliman in 1993-78. He also helped establish the Fine Arts program in UP in Cebu, spearheading a scholarship program for young and deserving talents and an annual competition named after him.

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"PEACESPACE" Series II

"PEACESPACE" Series

The soothing seascapes of Bañez

By Mara Pilotton
Correspondent

BANEZ Bañez

BANEZ'S OFFERINGS HAVE ALWAYS been a visual treat. His usually horizontal strokes of gradated colors and forms capture the tranquility and harmony of earth, sea and sky.

Some say his seascapes seem graphic in approach. This may be reflective of the artist's quarter-of-a-century work as a graphic and advertising designer.

Bañez's canvases are masterpieces of reverie, often—almost to the point of transcendental meditation. He does not copy scenes but creates his imagery ...his identity.

Bernardo Emmanuel "Bane" Bañez, a native of Baguio City, was born on Dec. 23, 1957. He was orphaned at age 7.

At the height of Pinatubo's ill, his house was inundated, instantly killing his parents and four others. Digging his way out of the rubble, the young boy, using with a stone unconsciously survived.

Undaunted, he worked his way through school, doing odd jobs—shining shoes, hawking and selling old newspapers and books, and sometimes begging for food crumbs. Later, he took to drawing and designing jobs from posters making to architectural renderings. He did all sorts of jobs, just to get through college.

In 1984, Bane graduated from the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts. After an advertising career for 20 years, he moved to painting—his true love—and the academe, teaching art at the College of the Holy Spirit.

He took his master's degree in Fine Arts from the Asian Institute of Arts under the Ateneo de Naval Press.

Quest for peace

Bane was a jolly, lively, loquacious, avocat creature of Pasig Sinaran songs. Like most typical Filipino professionals, he joined civic, sports and religious organizations. He was the founder of pCON, a group of artists who studied Fine Arts at UP.

He was an active member of the Saturday Group of Artists, the Watercolor Society of the Philippines, the Art Directors Club of the Philippines, and the Lions Club of Manila Sunshine.

An avid sports enthusiast, he was into chess, karate, ping-pong, basketball, tennis and rifle-pistol-shooting.

Unknown to many, Bane was a deeply religious person and a member of the LSS Charismatic Ministries and the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals.

Early in his painting career, Bane formulated certain objectives for himself. First, like any serious artist, he aimed for identity for a distinct style. "I would like people to recognize my work, even from a distance, and know it is my work without seeing my signature."

Second, he wanted to "touch and move" the soul of his viewers to a state of peace and serenity.

Perhaps his traumatic experience in childhood and the difficult struggle for survival during his teen years influenced his choice of the theme/topics.

Perhaps it was his quiet protest against man's ever-alarming ecology. Whatever the reason may be, his statement are effective expressions of his almost obsessive "desire for peace."

Third, from 1 Timothy 6:18, he cited his theory "to be generous and willing to share" his God-given talent to help others.

Knowing all these, I wanted to know the man. I wanted to understand the genius of the total artist, who has, indeed, achieved his objectives.

Where did Bane get his inspiration, his power of mind imagery?

Undoubtedly from his family—his wife Lita, who teaches piano, and his two children Sharmie and Angeli; from his mentor Pano Rotor, who gave him the direction in the composition of his painting process; and best for Bikkes who endowed him with the special talent to touch the human spirit.

John Ruskin in his essay on "Modern Painters" wrote: "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in poetry, prophecy and religion, all in one."

Bane's works can be seen in "Seascapes Reverie," his retrospective exhibit at Antares, 6/L, Bldg. A, Arnaiz, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

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All aboard the 'Jelo Submarine'

By Jessica Jaiswani-Kuldiao
Contributor

BUEN CALUBAYAN AND JAY Pacena have been buddies since college.

Both majored in advertising arts at the University of Santo Tomas-College of Fine Arts and Design, where they now teach—the former handling Life Painting and Free-hand Drawing, the latter Television Art/Video Production/Short film, Basic Animation, and Basic Advertising Layout.

They are members of the Young Thomasian Artists Circle, whose group exhibit, "Drag'God," is touring nationwide and soon, to Korea and Singapore.

Calubayan and Pacena have teamed up again in "Jelo Submarine," at Big Sky Mind Gallery (66 Jesus J. Rodriguez, near E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave.; tel. 897-8574/4890). The exhibit is a showcase of their latest, Calubayan with his stylized portraits, and Pacena turning inside to his digital/video experimentations.

"Jelo Submarine" is a testament to the long-standing friendship of the two that had seen them sharing knickerbocker beds when they were fourteen college boys resorting to singing the familiar lyrics to drown their blues. In the process, the libation must had moderated itself into their art, as their one of the band's songs, "Yellow Submarine," had become the inspiration for anything that had to do with fashion, colour and art-making. Hence, 'Jelo Submarine.'

"TEARS," by Pacena

Exciting young artists Buen Calubayan and Jay Pacena chart new artistic paths

"UNBEHAGEN [sic]," by Calubayan

In Calubayan's works, figures seem to dissolve into or emerge out of mottled hued pentimiti. The technique betrays his passion as realist figurations.

To Wink, "The second part of the now-seen coursed by strokes that result to the smearly; the muted colors spread out are blood in a kinetic monochrome, the movement approximating the random brush. This subject with eyes-seeing to threshold itself, the absence of a mouth alluding perhaps to a certain difficult about speech. Or the whole art-making is part of an unwrapping process, as though the subject were shedding a plastic membrane, about to take form from an amorphous mass, about to shed one's cocoon.

Also characteristic of Calubayan's style is the inclusion of other bits or figures in some vaguely native portion of the piece, which the viewer could only discover upon closer inspection. These seem secret figures peeking the night-cal-drained spaces that have been created in the artist attempt to unravel the picture work. Half the fun of looking at a Calubayan work, in fact, comes from the pleasure of suddenly being accosted by these hidden figures.

Rather chilling is "Unbehagen [sic]," a rendition of the artist's late father's smoke. The layered fun of rendering the charcoal results in an approximation of faded photographs. There are fleeted watches and candles glowing softly, and a barely-discernible crucifix over all. The super-natural aura is heightened by lines dashed down on the canvas, like stone markers in ghosts.

Particular also about Calubayan's canvas dimensions, which chiaroscuro evening excellently into play. Those familiar with the actual people who occupied the paintings attest to the accurate likeness in spite of the rough paint application and facile ease.

Pacena's body art

While Calubayan heavily paints image upon image through image, Pacena's digital art seems to layer gone easy on its strange layering. This time he took individual shots of various elements that he built into a composition, careful not to distract from literally.

Though Pacena says he admires Jay for painting such as Bonifacio and Merkel, his style almost mirrors that of Austrian artist Arnulf Rainer. Both artists paint over photographs, their works falling under the body art genre. Both have gone through a phase of using their own images in their works and are particular about the last expressions.

Pieces by the Austrian artist in Britain's Tate collection carry the same tabid strokes of paint that either cover or delibe the subject's body or parts of it, as if to erase or annihilate it.

With digital photography and the computer as his tools, Pacena may yet usher in a new brand of artistry.

Pacena also seems to have entered another phase in his photo-manipulation. Here are more careful executions—there's an apparent effort to keep images undisturbed when the paint seems anthropomorphic demands.

Among the subjects in a clear-skinned woman in a walking red gown. She stands out against a dark, forbidding backdrop, which may remind some of the Cardona theories red and black house contours and its suggestive power.

The striking composition of the work may perhaps point to Pacena's advertising-art savvy.

Elements such as the playground slide in "Carousel" may indicate that these compositions are inspired by happy memories, compared to Pacena's past pieces that usually dealt with self-doubt, self-castigation and self-torment. But the artist dismisses that his subjects are actually in a cemetery, unrecognizable because of overgrowth, signifying the passing of darker times.

Despite the eclectic happy note of most of Pacena's new works, old habits die hard. In "Tears," a deluge of tears runs from the subject's mouth. Pacena says the subject's eyes could not express inside the tears, as the mouth "naturally"—or "naturel"—cries.

Calubayan and Pacena agree their art merely reflects their artistic attitude and creative mindset; it's the adventure they ride through the sea of life, with its interludes of calm and storms. Both of them could sing the same song, "We all live in a yellow submarine..."

E-mail the author at mojo.day@gmail.com

"SUBMARINE Queen," by Calubayan

"DETUNED," by Pacena

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MONDAY, JULY 17, 2006 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

Manila Polo Club heritage under threat

The barbarians of development have set their sights at ruining another Pablo Antonio architectural masterpiece

CLOSE TO A DECADE ago, the Manila Polo Club announced improvement plans. Recently the current board of directors unveiled a new development plan. The remodeling and improvement cycle has now come around once more.

The issues on the future of the 1940 Manila Polo Club structure are still basically the same, as I am reprinting a major part of a column written at that time, first appearing here and published a few years later in my book "Super Chronicles, Manila, 2001).

"Carefully staying out of the public eye is an intrinsic part of a private clubs nature. Therefore, the Manila Polo Club, hidden away in Forbes Park, is especially a place that not too many people get to see. However, those who do find themselves in the by-invitation-only environment of the huge 1930s architecture set in an incredible expanse of open space in downtown Makati.

"The Manila Polo Club's main building has been around since 1940. It was designed by Pablo Antonio, the revered architect of the city whose genius was honored by the Philippine Republic Chat designated him a National Artist for Architecture together with Juan Nakpil and Leandro Locsin.

"Admittedly the architecture is dated but it has been so meticulously maintained that it shows no signs of tiredness. The look of the main structure has not changed much since its early days. Since my first visit there in 1969, the look has remained pretty much the same to this day establishing a wonderful feeling of continuity and constancy. These surroundings have been a sacred home to what now approaches four generations of members.

"Recently [about 18 years ago] the club launched an upgrading and improvement project, preparatory that all of its members will definitely approve of and appreciate..."

Tropical architecture

There is absolutely no issue with improvement. Facilities must be upgraded to keep up with the latest technology. Size is expansion or not, but there's an issue on maintaining the Manila Polo Club heritage while carrying out an expansion program that brings facilities up to date.

Now to that, among the main issues is the future of the unique architectural heritage of the Manila Polo Club.

A decade ago the renovation scheme envisioned to ... erode the tradition of the grand historical resorts, in particular that of the Shingle Style seaside hotels along the northeastern [New England Coast.]

The appropriateness of evoking the wintry northeastern

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villador

sea of Cape Cod tropical Philippines was difficult to imagine, but it was extremely clear that there was a determined plan to distance the traditional 1930s image that had always been associated with this club building.

The current renovation plan proposes to add a new large building that disturbs the original structure. It does away with vital areas that establish club tradition for members, the lobby and the main lounge on the second floor.

The lobby may prove to be inadequate should the large addition to the premises be approved for construction. However, the present lobby establishes the homey, residential feel that the Manila Polo Club is known for and that its members value, and for that reason it should remain as it is.

The main lounge is a marvel of a space. There is nothing like it in Manila. Exposed beams add height to its ceiling. Generous expansive open-air windows flank sides of the lounge, a masterpiece of cross-ventilated tropical architecture.

From its west terrace is a magnificent view of the Makati skyscrapers seen above the Forbes Park roofs beyond the club's elevated baseball field. On the opposite side, the east terrace, with grassy slope as a viewing stands that descend to the large polo field bordered by a row of Ficus Benjamin dipterocarp

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We find ways

Incestuous relationship of photography and painting

"THE MYSTERY of Mary Magdalene," by Al Macalangan

"VIEW of the Cultex from the UP Alumni Building," by Fernando Bueno

By Constantino C. Tejero

THE NOTION THAT PHOtography is a poor relation of painting in the realm of the fine arts is no longer valid. Most and more the two practice symbiosis it's almost inveterate, as many painters base their works on photographs and just as many photographers try to achieve in their works a painterly look.

Three of these painterly photographers are exhibiting 19 of their works in "Seen This?" until July 22 in The Crucible Gallery in the Artwalk, L-4, Bldg. 6, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

In Marulanga was trained as a painter in University of Santo Tomas, but his quest for "newer and less traditional forms of expression" made him abandon painting, after studying cinematography at the Metrofilm Film Institute, he soon noticeably turn photography.

Traditional loves

In Singapore, he exhibited his works in its art museum, and presented a project on family portraits of homosexual couples and their children, specifically Filipino-Australian immigrants.

In New Zealand, he exhibited a survey with his wedding veils in scenic/eye spaces, as well as grandiose pictures of "men in uniform" such as nurses and security guards.

Having lived in Italy for 13 years, he has been trying to promote cultural exchanges between Italy and the Philippines through photography: in Italy he showed Filipino life in 250 snapshots, while in Manila he exhibited 300 images of Italian life.

Marulanga says he is "particularly sensitive to the human form and spirit" in his art. But while he may think he has finally turned his back on color and more traditional forms of expression, we don't think so.

Consider "The Mystery of Mary Magdalene," one of his new photos in the exhibit. This image

"FLIGHTING Girl," by Escora

of a boy carrying a rabbit's shoulders recalls an Italian Renaissance painting, while the boy's sexually ambiguous features and the rabbit's symbolic nature suggest a modern sensibility.

Narrative bent

It's not as well with the photographs of Nick Cuenco, the only one of the three with no formal training in art.

A graduate of Ateneo Administration and Accountancy from University of the Philippines, Lamera was an accountant working with Ernst & Young Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co. before he ventured into photojournalism.

Now a photographer of Philippine Daily Inquirer, he won last month the Gold Prize for the General Photo category in the 16 Asian Photo Contest, for his picture of the Quinnipayo mount operation showing children guiding lumbers on sidings who are depicted only through their boots.

That photo bested 20,000 entries from over 500 photographers worldwide. The executive here is there, as well as the formal

"ARTIST Tam Anora is crowned recently on "Women and Art" at Gallery Joaquin commission with the exhibit by various artists on women subjects. With Anora (in his) are Carlos Portal, Kate Pipar, Maria Parial, Jade Tantoo, Josephine Gomez and Carl Perez

"FATHER That Book," by Camilo Mir

"EDWIN Viñeyra," by Joey Roy

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We mind ways

Visual Arts

Cuenco at Ayala

Cuenco, an art group promoting young artists and appreciation of the arts, presents Mir Gal Dalisay's "Reflections on Red" at Ayala Museum. The sculptures incorporate the color red, and will be accompanied by short stories, poems and other writings. The show opens on July 21, 6 p.m. Call 3611-8000/60 or visit www.cuenco.ph

Yor at Nino

Danilo Yor's "Elinds," a collection of abstractions that explore varied aspects and phases of sound and emotion, will be on display at Galeri Nina in Magamot, July 21-31. Call 8417393.

Bay at Asiro

Galeria Asiroya inserts the latest works of Joey Roy in "Poetic Moods," a collection of portraits of friends, family from the art and advertising world. The exhibit features portraits of Bernadi, Gus Abad, Edwin Viñeyra, Carl Nuevo, Regie Poor, Rico and Marcha Lozada, Lit Cruz, Nikki Lim-Ato, Lydia Velasco, Boo Sevilla, Migs Villanueva, Ana Labrador, Jesus Francisco and Eugene Hernando. The exhibit runs until Aug. 3 at Galeria Asiro, 29 Lili Business Plaza, 1550 M. Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati. Call 8923660, 5162222 and 7260015.

Tiongco at Art Space

Orlando L. Tiongco, a lawyer and retired executive who has turned to art, has just opened his one-man show at the Art for Peace in the Alabang Town Center, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. "To Share a Bit of Sea" features Tiongco's acrylic landscapes. The artist's artmaking is influenced by the teachings of Carolino Jaspar of the National Artist and Arcilla Painters' Society and by the Works of Elio Vittorini Modern College in Manila.

Tiongco said he has also been influenced by young Filipino artist Wilfredo Barabona and art writer Manuel Dalisay.

Ilugas images at Alcove

The Alcove Photo Gallery and the Pelikula Photo Library present "Faces of the Cordillera: The Terror and Hope," until July 31. The exhibit features two titles, the Ibontoc and the Ifugao—using selected images from the Pelikula Photo Library's collection and text materials culled from Filipiana Heritage Library's Filipiniana collection. The Alcove Photo Gallery is at Filipiniana Heritage Library along Makati Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati. Call 8921881.

Animation workshop

The Ayala Museum will conduct digital animation workshops for all persons of all ages, Aug. 5-6. Registration forms are now available. Call 7577111 to 21 local 14.

Seminar at Museo Pambata

The Museo Pambata Foundation will hold "Edukasiyang Calabarzon Museums," an intensive four-week seminar-workshop, Aug. 1-Sept. 9. Joining fee is P1,200 per participant. Fee includes all conference kits, workshop materials and meals. Application forms are available at the Museo Pambata office, Roxas Boulevard and South Drive, Manila. Deadline is July 21. Call 5272181 to 88, 5272194 (fax) or e-mail mabuhi@museopambata.org.

Arans lecture at Met

Sculptor Jerry Aranas will talk about the communal bond and design inspiration behind his works in the exhibit "Bahaynayuli, Alibu" at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila on July 20, 2 p.m. Reservation is on-line until July 20. Call 5251161 or 5250051.

GUESTS viewing the 17 artworks on exhibit.

(RIGHT) Lawyer Pinoy Salud, Rizza Salud, Chit Salud and the artist

Jack Salud wows Japan

The Filipino pointillist showed his works at the Mori gallery of Roppongi Hills, with Princess Takamado cutting the ribbon

THE ARTIST at work

AMBASSADOR Domingo L. Siazon Jr. and Madame Kay Siazon assist HIH Princess Takamado as she cuts the ceremonial ribbon at Jack Salud's art exhibit in Roppongi Hills, Tokyo.

FILIPINO PAINTER JACK SALUD, known for his pointillism technique, was the focal point of the 108th Philippine Independence Day anniversary celebration hosted by the Philippine embassy in Tokyo.

Salud's 108th one-man exhibit, "Onward Seventy II," was launched at the Mori Art Gallery of the Roppongi Hills complex in Tokyo. The exhibit featured 17 artworks on large acrylic canvases.

Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado cut the ceremonial ribbon. She was assisted by Ambassador Domingo L. Siazon Jr. and his wife Kay.

Ambassador Siazon said this year's observance of Independence Day in Tokyo was made even more memorable as 2006 marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan.

The golden anniversary, he said, tells the story of "a friendship unburdened by past grievances" and "a relationship that has positive effects on regional peace and prosperity."

The exhibition was held for four days attracting a new 1,500 viewers a day.

Chikage Ogi, president of the House of Councilors; Benji Bonoan, minister for Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Dr. Keiichi Ivaguchi, state minister for Gender Equality and Social Affairs; and Nobuyasu Ishihara, former state minister for Administrative and Regulatory Reforms and former minister for Land, Infrastructure and Transportation, were among those who attended.

Salud was accompanied by his parents Pong and Chit, and his Japanese wife Rumi. Rumi's father Masaharu Yatsuda was also present.

In her congratulatory message, Princess Takamado expressed her admiration at Salud's accomplishments as an artist at his age, and conveyed "profound appreciation" of his painstaking efforts to bring 1,980 dots to every inch of his huge artworks.

Manila Polo...

From page D1

Visual landmarks

Both areas are the visual landmarks of the Manila Polo Club. They deserve in any the way they are and their skyline views should not be hindered by new structures.

The practice of conservation stipulates that façades of heritage structures must not be touched. The two additional areas grafted into the present façade will have to be relocated, but then that is an easy thing to do.

The Manila Polo Club is an architectural jewel unappreciated by many of its members. Philippine heritage experts acknowledge it as worthy of high national heritage significance.

That its architect is a National Artist certainly adds prestige to the building, and its at least entire condition further increases its heritage value.

The Manila Polo Club is of national heritage value, because it is among the last surviving examples of the Pablo Antonio style of living (Western Art Deco with tropical Philippine environment, a style that has influenced subsequent generations of architects.

It was probably the first large structure built in the early days of Makati and certainly among the first to be built in Bridgeway Subdivision of the late 1960s. What increases its significance is that the building belongs to the same owners who are still using it for the original function it was designed for 57 years ago.

For many of its long-time members, the Manila Polo Club feels like their second home, a place for returning to familiar surroundings, a place as familiar as the family's ancestral home.

Some families are now on their fourth generation of using club facilities. That makes for a lot of continuity and tradition which has always been the case for the Manila Polo Club lifestyle.

These are the intrinsic values that are lost in the 2006 development plan. It is possible that many are not aware or unable to articulate the values, but they impact a special image to Manila Polo Club.

These values are lost in the 2006 development plan.

Comments are welcome at pmb_plaza@gmail.com

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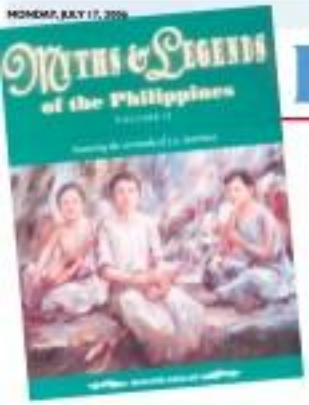

ARTIST Jun Martinez

PUBLISHER Marlene Aguilar

"THE LEGEND of Kapeng Barak"

'Myths & Legends of the Philippines, Volume II' to be launched

PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR Marlene Aguilar wants to promote Philippine folklore through letters and the arts.

"We have thousands of folk tales existing every region, stories that originate from over 90 dialects," she said. "This is such a diversity of historical folklore. There are stories of the moon and the stars, of creation, of nature, of magnificent deeds. This rich history defines us, who we are."

Among Aguilar's favorites are the stories that describe the first Filipinos, their beliefs, their lives, the way things were before we were colonized, such as "The Legend of Creation," in which god created man and woman from the same bamboo, of equal status, with one gender line; "The Land of the Immortals," which tells of the Egyptian origins of a tribe in Mindanao; and the story of Carina Awa, which is supposedly named after a wealthy and generous woman named "Ka Isa."

Aguilar wants to preserve the stories for young people like her own sons. She established them is "not enough of Philippine art, culture and history in our educational system."

As a result, Aguilar is publishing Myths & Legends of the Philippines." The five-volume series, she said, "will contain around 100 stories and this is just a thumbnail of what exists."

In restoring the stories, Aguilar drafted artist Jun Martinez to do the colorful illustrations.

"Each art is dedicated to the depiction of folklore," Aguilar said. "Gentle lines, a pastel, quiet, restrained, full emotion. His depiction of the mountains of the past. His mood is distinct. You can tell it's Jun Martinez as soon as you enter the room. His strokes have become more confident, more dynamic, more poised, more telling."

The first volume of Myths & Legends" sold out fast. Aguilar said a 92 spins from the US wrote to tell her how the book overcame. Of him with books and how he had brought several copies to give to friends and relatives. She added that a boy recognized her from her daughter in the book, and asked up on meeting her. He told her he loved the book very much.

Therefore, Aguilar is running the next volume in the series.

"Myths & Legends of the Philippines Volume II" will be launched at the Metropolitan Museum on July 20, 4:30 p.m. Curated homes will be featured including Magdalena Albarra, journalist and author Adlin Yap-Buiza, jewelry designer Loren de Guzman, Artist Ombelgenio Bank of Arts. Richard Bravo, and Isabel Vihol of Vihol Publishing House.

In connection with the new book, Martinez is holding the one-man show "Beyond Myths and Legends" at the Art Super Gallery on 532 Emigrante ave., White Plains, QC, until Aug. 4. Call 09178250075.

"THE LEGEND of the Jacket Gil"

"WAR the Sea Cries at Night"

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Carol Marks

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Jenny Angeles recalls her IPL experience: "I was about my 3rd treatment when I noticed a change. After IPL, wow, I became flawless! My pores became smaller and barely even visible. Friends would ask, 'How did your skin get so smooth and clear?' and I tell them I got IPL." The funny thing is, some of them have tried IPL with other dermatologists but didn't get results the same. I don't know if there's a difference in the intensity they use, but my friends definitely noticed that the IPL at Facial Care Center gave me actual, visible results."

Another fan of IPL is actress/interior designer consultant Carol Marks. She happily reports: "I used to have an uneven skin tone because of pigmentation and freckles. After IPL, my skin became even to the point I'd always have to wear make-up because I was afraid to let people see me without it. Now, since I love going to Boracay, I can enjoy the sun and not make-up free!"

Dr. Jacqueline Bermejo has IPL Photorejuvenation treatment at work.

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Actress Dawn Zulueta is all praises for this blemish eraser as well. "My problem has always been the sunspots at once," she reveals. "Since my skin is oily I became prone to it. When I started doing IPL, I noticed that my pores got smaller and I stopped getting breakouts as early as the 3rd treatment! Over-time, my skin was looking cleaner, and complexion-wise, so much better. Before, I couldn't leave the house without putting on some concealer on my blemishes. Now I can go out with only sunblock! I'm confident enough even without make-up because I know my skin is clear and even."

Jenny, Carol and Dawn are only three of many satisfied clients who have reported a reduction in age spots, freckles and other skin discolorations. Most women who lead active and busy lifestyles are happy with the fact that aside from the visible improvement in their skin, they experience relatively no downtime. This means that one can actually have lunch, even attend glowing skin after approximately 30 minutes of treatment, and can go to work on the same day, as if nothing happened at all!

Jenny Angeles

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Russian music takes center stage

By Antonio C. Hilo
Contributor

RUSSIAN MUSIC TOOK CENTER stage at the CCP recently as a fitting finale to the Russian Cultural Festival, held in celebration of the anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations forged between Russia and the Philippines some 30 years ago.

Two young, world-class Russian artists, Felix Korobov, conductor of the Moscow State Musical Theatre, and pianist Denis Matsuev, Tchaikovsky competition grand prize winner, awed the audience with the powerful tandem they forged in rendering two popular Russian concerti: Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 in B Flat Minor, Op. 23, and Rachmaninov's Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op.18.

Partaking in the celebration was the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra (SMPO), which fully came up to measure, sounding very much like a world-class orchestra. During its first gala set in, the members played well-controlled numbers.

Completing the all-Russian program was Michael Glinka's overture to "Ruslan and Ludmilla."

In the overture, which opened the program, Korobov at once established rapport, displaying ease as he assuredly wielded the baton over the quickly expanding musicians of the SMPO. The rendition was thorough, shining with well-etched nuances that moved the audience to thunderous applause, spiced with shouts of bravos at the end.

PIANIST Denis Matsuev

And to think that there was only one rehearsal with the conductor and the pianist, done on the day before the concerto performances, according to the maestro Yoani Maraja.

Matsuev also played on the same evening of the said concerto rehearsal, as he electrified the audience with his dazzling performance of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, which resulted in the long queue at the box office for purchase of tickets to the next day's concert.

When he entered the hall, Matsuev at once got attention with his magnetic presence. Tall and statuesque, he sported a warm look. His resemblance to American pianist Van Cliburn could not simply remain unnoticed.

It must be recalled that Cliburn's winning concerto that made him the first American to bag the grand prize in the International Tchaikovsky competition was the same Tchaikovsky opus Matsuev played. Manila heard Cliburn in his celebrated performances of the said work both at the CCP and the Araneta Coliseum in 1972.

On the piano, he was composed and cool and did not show particular choreographic movements, except when the passages called for them. Entering into Matsuev's rendition, truly a virtuoso of the first order, he refused to play with only raw technical prowess, but found it such sublime emotional warmth.

Neither did he allow powerful tones to solely dominate the soundscape he assuredly etched. Finesse wrapped them to provide the musical nuances that all literature ordered that the audience to savor the listening pleasure both Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov breathed into their works.

There was no rushing of passages, especially the bass. Instead, Matsuev made them sing in clear, luminous lines.

Debonair

Both works contain lyrical as well as dolorous thematic materials that tug the heart. The climaxes are brilliant, they spell courageous moments of heroism. And yet Matsuev's David Oistrakh sensitivity, integrity converted into melodrama.

Though his dynamics were clearly controlled, these shades of gradations of differences were decisively etched, thus revealing a true-to-the-mill "black and white" rendition—indeed, an immature style that only clearly-cuts-to-cut? and loud passages, but and does tempi and the like.

Matsuev played both concert with convincing solid dispatch, the technical virtuosity invested in the parallel octaves, which he rendered with Lisztian fire.

The cadenza was particularly absorbing. Here, all the more the literature were relished by his striking tonic ranging. Fully translated and was hammered out, deep and resounding.

In the Rachmaninov concerto, the opening notes were struck with smooth surety. Matsuev kept his dialogue with the orchestra in the second movement with stillness or hurry, a refinement that was both soulful and refreshing.

Rapport was tight between him and the conductor. Scrubies never mattered. The orchestra played to the full with sweet enthusiasm.

The layout was commendable; the bravos obviously placed at the right corner and the double basses behind the violins resulted in a well-blended symphonic tone. The ensemble work was perfect, and one would think it was achieved through several rehearsals.

"Only in a single rehearsal," recounted maestro Maraja.

Indeed, the SMPO musicians should be commended. Maraja further added that Matsuev and Korobov always play together as a tandem. Matsuev always engages Korobov in contact in performance.

A pompous and swollen bid by the Russian ambassador's wife Viktoria Beltsaptsev and concluding former First Lady Imelda Marcos ascended the stage and sang "Happy Birthday" to the pianist, who was showered with Filipiniana gifts.

The San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra fully came up to measure under Felix Korobov's baton, sounding very much like a world-class orchestra

SOLOIST Denis Matsuev

'Florante at Laura' opens Gantimpala's 29th season

GANTIMPALA THEATER FOUNDation (GTF), together with the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), opens its 29th season with the Komedya version of Francisco Balagtas' "Florante at Laura."

"This Florante at Laura' production uses the Filipino theater form of the komedya, with its stylized entrances, marches, battles and exploits, and the conflict and romance that befall the warring kingdoms of Albanian and Moro. We firmly believe that it should be staged as such for it was the prevailing theater form during Balagtas' time," GTF artistic director Tony S. Perez said.

Perez also pointed out another reason that production is special. "We bring to love two great men of Philippine arts and culture as the famous Filipino love story here and the literary version of National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario, and we interpreted the masterpieces of the Komedya from San Buenaventura de Bondoc, Bulacan, Isabela and Batanes as researched and documented by our newly proclaimed National Artist for Dance, Ramon Obusan."

The show features Manny Madrigal (Florante), Nella Aguado (Laura), Phoebe de Guzman (Adolfo), Wenda Valladares (Menandro), Christopher David (Aladin), Angel Reyson (Flerida), Song Sinhile (Haring Linceo), Ange Caballo (Lake Bitoon), Ani Ilagan Pella (Haring Florena), and Michael Gaq Ti-tres (Haring Konrad Florante).

Rodrick Pelit directs. Lights design by Andy Villareal. Set design by Norman Dekakoda. Stage manager is Bert Oreo. Production manager is Cheryl Chin. Makeup by Jose Ildefonso Cabo-Cano.

"Florante at Laura' performances are on select July 22 (8 p.m., Center) at the Park Open Air Auditorium, Manila; July 28-30 and Aug. 1-6 (10 a.m./3 p.m., AFP Theatre, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City); Aug. 11-13 (10 a.m./3 p.m.) SM Southmall, Las Piñas City) and Aug. 19 (Expo Filipino, Clark, Pampanga).

For tickets, sponsorship, queries for outreach tours and other information, call 8992745/8988800.

MARCUS Madrigal (Florante), Nella Aguado (Laura) and Wenda de Guzman (Adolfo) in Gantimpala Theater's "Florante at Laura"

Hiyas Hila in homecoming concert

PIANIST LEISEL A. HILA IS featured in in a solo recital at the Philamlife Theatre on Aug. 11, 8 p.m. The recital is the first to be marked for the scholarship program of the UP Alpha Sigma Fraternity Alumni Association.

The first part of the program consists of Beethoven's 32 Variations in C Minor; the second movement; Stephen Finder/Prelude; E. Mezzabotta; IV. Serene; and Debussy's Images, Book I (1905).

The second part, as all Bisaya program in observance of the great composer's 250th birth anniversary, opens with Mozart's Overture to Die Zauberflote to be rendered by the Manila Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Prof. Arturo T. Molina. Mozart's Concerto in A Major, K-488, for piano and orchestra, with Hyas as soloist, concludes the program.

Hyas is a sophomore in the Bachelor of Music (BM) degree program at the School of Music of the University of Wisconsin under the tutelage of Leeds and Geneviève Mozart. Prof. Jo-Ha Ahn-Lee. She was a winner in the university's concerto competition last December where she played the above-mentioned Mozart concerto as her winning piece.

She bagged the first prize in the recital to the Outdoor Division of the Allied Arsenal Scholarship Competition of the Inchcape Club of Minnesota and second prize of the Elmer Bell Piano Competition both held in Minnesota last April and February this year, respectively.

A 2006 Quezon Fellow of the Asian Cultural Council, Hyas Hila is the recipient of the Centennial Piano Fellowship (2006), awarded by the School of Music in recognizing student who excels in the live audition for admission. She is also a teaching assistant at the School of Music and College of Liberal Arts.

Hyas earned both her Bachelor of Music (2003) and Master of Music (2004) degrees, major in piano performance, from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in California, where she was a student of Mack McCray.

She was a recipient of the Fargo Barcelon Scholarship in piano and the Glendenwill Scholarship for the entire duration of her study at the conservatory. She was a consistent dean's listee, and had received departmental awards in the undergraduate level in Gustav Holmes and Chemistry.

Sponsors of the concert include Chanbond/Globe, Toyota Alabang Philippines and Philamlife Insurance Company.

Tickets are available at the Hyatt Regency Executive Pavilion Service Section, tel. 4365641; Philamlife PR office, 5215000 local 11258 and 5369850; MCO Foundation, 8756195; Scholastica's School of Music, 8917606 local 2001, and at the SaltDoberz concert line.

HYAS Hila

Spotlight on 13-year-old pianist

THE MANILA CHAMBER Orchestra (MCO) Foundation and Equitable PCI Bank present the "MCO Young Artists Recital Series," featuring young pianist Noreen Paula Tan Ngo at Equitable PCI Bank's Francisco Santiago Hall, on July 30, 3 p.m.

The recital repertoire will include Beethoven's Sonatas No. 13 in E and No. 14 in D, Beethoven's Sonata No. 3 in C, op. 2 No.3; Chopin's Etudes in E, Op. 10 No.3 and in C Op. 10 No. 1; Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12, and F de Lisle's "Bayan ng Ilog Ilog."

Noreen Ngo was introduced to the piano instrument at an early age since her mother is also a pianist teacher and an alumna of the University Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music. She started her formal piano lessons at age 5 under the tutelage of Aida Santa Romualdez. She is a Bisaya by winner in both categories: Piano Solo 8-11 (2002) and 11 (2004), and in Holcim College Contest for Applied Music's MMCO Concerto for Young Artist Piano Concerto Cat. 8 (2005). She was accepted in the UST Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Dean Ariel Santos.

Noreen is 13 years old and a student of Chung Ed Shek College, where she has garnered academic honors in both English and Chinese instruction.

The "MCO Young Artists Recital Series" is one of the programs of the MCO Foundation, which is geared toward supporting young and highly talented artists by giving them performance opportunities live time to gain the experience, exposure and endorsement.

Admission is free. Seats are on a first-come, first-served basis.

Call 8194339 or 9487000 local 2218.

Humorist David Sedaris coming to Manila

DAVID SEDARIS HAS BEEN called "the most brilliantly witty New Yorker since Dorothy Parker" by the New York Magazine; as "positively toxic" by Booklist; and "one of America's most prickly and most delicious young comic talents" by The Washington Post.

After his broadcast debut recounting his altogether strange but humorous experiences as a fussy's grave lights-tied elf, Sedaris has given speaking engagements, which have been consistently receiving rave-only efforts. His sardonic wit has earned him a place among America's greatest humorists.

The master of satire behind the bestsellers "Barrel Fever," "Holy Ship Ready in Corduroy and Denim" and "Holidays-on-Ice," as well as personal essay collections "Naked" and "Me Talk Pretty One Day," is set to talk up a storm here in the Philippines.

Powerbooks Specialty Store honors David Sedaris as its author of the Month and treats Filipino readers to the popular writer's book signing and reading engagement this July.

Everyone is invited to the three-day event on July 27, 6 p.m., at Powerbooks' Shangri-La Plaza branch, on July 28, 3 p.m., at the Alabang outlet and on July 29, 3 p.m. at Powerbooks Greenbelt. The signing's first two days include a 15-minute reading while the third day includes a one-hour reading session.

For those who already have copies of Sedaris' books, no purchase or signing pass is required. If you intend to have only one book signed by the author. For others who want to have more than one book signed, you may purchase any book by Sedaris from July 1-29 at any Powerbooks branch.

A book purchaser gives us its dividual-use signing pass, which will allow him to have three books signed. The signing pass can be used on any of the scheduled dates. Each pass is valid for one-time use only. Present your official receipts at the Customer Service Counter of the branch where the purchase was made to obtain your pass.

To further facilitate the signing, Powerbooks will allow for limited numbered stubs that will be given out on a first come, first serve basis on the day of the signing. Customers should present their signing pass at the registration booth (which opens three hours before the event) to get a numbered stub. Those who intend to have only one book signed are also required to register and obtain a numbered stub at the registration booth.

Powerbooks Specialty Store is a complete one-stop bookstore with branches at Greenbelt 4 (tel. 7576428 to 29), SM Megamall (5352888 to 99), Alabang Town Center (8089662 to 63), Glorietta (7529765), Shangri-La (6398823-25), Robinsons Place Ermita (5233334, 5243448), and Mall of Asia (5560244).

'Purpose-Driven Life' author visits Manila

Dr. Rick Warren

THE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE Philippines, in partnership with Purpose-Driven South Asia, is bringing to Manila Dr. Rick Warren, the internationally acclaimed author of the best-selling book, "Purpose-Driven Life," and his wife, author-teacher Kay Warren, for an exclusive two-day love hosted by MAP.

Mr. Warren will talk about "Supporting A Spouse of Influence," to be held on July 26, 12 n.n., in the Grand Ballroom of Hotel Inter-Continental Manila. Dr. Warren will be the guest at the CEO Dinner Forum with the theme, "Stewardship of Influence and Affluence," on July 25, 6 p.m., at the Nikal Ballroom of the Makati Shangri-La.

The couple's visit will be highlighted by a two-day conference for the general public, from July 25-26, at the Araneta Coliseum, with the theme "Build a Purpose-Driven Nation, Live Purpose-Driven Lives."

Rev Warren is co-founder of Saddleback Church and Area of Mercy. She has authored many inspirational books under the "Encouragement for Pastor's Wives" series. She visited the Philippines in October 2004 to spread their ministering to leprosy patients at Tala Leprosarium as part of her church's global PEACE initiative.

Dr. Warren's "Purpose-Driven Life," meanwhile, has sold over 30 million copies worldwide.

MAP is encouraging its members to get sponsorship for these fees. Proceeds from the lunch and conferencing will go toward the purchase of books, CDs, DVDs, manuals, to facilitate the Purpose-Driven Ministry in the Philippines. An initial portion of the proceeds will also be used to provide materials to the public attending the conference at the venue in Coliseum who cannot afford to purchase them.

Please register early and take advantage of the early-bird rates. Depending upon the level of sponsorship, ranging from patron, donor, bronze, silver, gold to platinum, a member can avail of lunch or dinner with book plus a half-day session on Purpose-Driven Life to be facilitated by Purpose-Driven Philippines.

Call 7511147 or 52 or e-mail mapsec@globelines.com.ph.

Mann's masterpiece

A SAD AND EROTIC TALE OF A sensual quest for love, "Death in Venice," Penguin Books' Award Winner Feature for July, 66-Jove aged novelist Gustav von Aschenbach as he travels to Venice where he sees and becomes obsessed with the stunning yet unattainable beauty of Tadzio, a young Polish boy.

The controversial novella is by Nobel Prize laureate Thomas Mann. Born in Germany, Mann is called in to provide glass university and later marrying the daughter of a prominent Jewish family of intellectuals. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929 for his novel, "Buddenbrooks."

Powerbooks has branches at Greenbelt 4 (tel. 7576428 to 29), Megamall (6352888 to 99), Alabang Town Center (8089662 to 63), Glorietta (7529765), Shangri-La (6398823/25) and Robinsons Place Ermita (5233334, 5243448).

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Auteurs as terrorists in a McMovie age

By Ed Lejano
Cover Feature

THE VIBRANCY OF ASIAN cinema got a big boost as the films competition winners were announced at the recently concluded Singapore International Film Festival.

The roster of winners for the festival's eight Screen Awards was a telling measure of the region's vitality as well as a curious barometer of world cinema's offerings in the midst of harsh realities.

In this era where the typical "auteurist" flicks is Hollywood weight in the global box office, the equation of moviemaking has made it harder and harder for "art films" to get commercial exhibition beyond the limited festival circuit and into the high-stakes commercial market. But most of those best cinematic films from countries not known for money are getting slimmer, and they usually end up going straight to video or relegated to a "Wonderful" limbo.

The wallets of the generic blockbuster film fans for the world slimfest a a lover till he complains in search of signs of intelligent life beyond the summer movie formula, or three. This creates the need movie franchise and a re-classic/loophole cycle ensues.

But the genius of the opposite, to borrow auteur Bazin's phrase, amidst the barely standardized, technologically dependent colossal juggernaut, can still bear a small window of opportunity for true blue film artists.

Individual vision

Works borne out of creative freedom and individual visions are what distributors normally avoid and what film festivals champion. Films that hardly see the glint of world-wide distribution, features being what they are, viewers momentarily forgo mindless blockbusters, predictable Hollywood sequels or spin-offs and action flicks of the hot and frozen kind.

At the Singapore International Film Festival, the breadth and depth of Asian cinema—sublime, esoteric—was on full display

Events like the SIFF are where the sublime, the obscure and the esoteric manage to keep afloat, more or, at times, soar in an annual celebration of cinematic works. With its track record of giving recognition to the most important Asian filmmaker, this year's edition was no exception as its film competition awardees attested to.

Indonesian helmsman Riri Riza's (Gie) journey's triumph for "Ca Only Silly," bagging best picture and capturing the critical acclaim of his "Ultimate Girl" from 2003. He utilized the same talented actress in this tragi-comic film was about a thirty-something music depressive and the first dysfunctional man in her life.

In situating it in a "tandem downpours," its Japanese locale became a perfect fit for its aimless characters in this heartfelt story of losing roles amidst all the gloom.

"Cin," a gloriously produced biopic-cum-political activist Jiang danger-ously during the 1960s Indonesia, was awarded the jury prize. Riri Riza's sweeping portrait of the Chinese-Indonesian Soe Hok-Gie showed an uncompromising idealist daring a turbulent time in the country's history couched to cover against the clawing of ex-President Suharto's regime.

The 147-minute film devoted ample screentime to its subject yet kept a safe distance for an all-together undigestive effort, perhaps being true to the nature of the real-life Gie.

Two first-time filmmakers, representing two distinctive filmmaking practices, were awarded the Stepan/Pipeac special prize, seen to the award's chance for energizing new talents.

"Taking Sulow Home" by Ling Tiong presented a rare glimpse of the other China. Featured prettyy images were enlivened by scenes of rural life far removed from the Chinese-sanctioned violins of flying daggers and-romance films. As its cast of nonprofessional actors and minimalist mise-en-scene, the film achieved a hard-hitting realism, especially in its bloody conclusion.

The adolescent protagonist's criminal act and the end came as a shock, and could be read as a figurative obeying of patriarchy from the Chinese under belly point of view.

John Torres' triumph

From a symbolic montage of crime to that of artist as narrated in the premiere of Filipino filmmaker John Torres' work, which met with the above-mentioned film.

"Todo Todo Teros," channeled the spirit of late '60s Jean Luc-Godard, combined with a post 9/11 angst in this experimental co-production work. Its use of found and organized footage, covered with a narrative that was added during the editing stage, resulted in a meandering, shape-shifting flow.

The film opened with an intriguing set-up—a voiceover narrating how he woke up as a terrorist and then, thrilled on to a journey that was both physical and effective.

In the no-budget works of newbie directors, Ivrea and Ling Tiong, were voices from emerging auteurs that bear watching in the age of the multi-million blockbuster movie.

The SIFF planned host to a number of international premieres, like two other Silver Screen awardees, Kelvin Tong's "Love Story" and "Hyper Active" by Chokmiko del Mundo Jr.

The fully packed screening of the former, a Hongkong/Singapore co-production, finally premiered in Manila's Metro Vue First Cut, suspended to a ripe audience, who gamely played along with its puzzle of a narrative in a film that dwelled the best director award for the Singaporean filmmaker.

"Love Story" is composed of disparate stories connected by the strand of desire in final-ing true love, done in a comedy on film style. Plenty of attention were to shot production values that, at times, underscored the many-sided emotive content...or critiques perhaps of its cold and hybrid nature.

"Hyper Active" were the best actor award for Hiyah Castillo, a child actor in his first film role. Set in the '70s, the Filipino film centered on a dreamy-eyed boy who wanted to be a movie star. It's one of two film clips of singing seen (shots of the boy pair) being a tribute to Philippine movies and stars of the period. Castillo's best actor win certainly lent an iconic spin to the kid-good narrative that might actually help the child star's rise to real stardom.

The Lebanese film, "Kiss Me Not on the Eyes," the festival's opening film, had best actress winner Hanane Tash sensitively portraying the lead character Jinan. She played a student of poetry and belly dancing in this well-crafted drama set amidst Egypt's political turmoil and the Arab-Israeli conflict, covering unrequited love and the Big Bang-friendly feminized gaze. The film cleverly had moved what could be another empowerment yarn with a sensitive depiction of female sexuality.

The other films like "Men At Work" from Iran, Indian's "After the Night...Dawn," "Under the Ceiling" from Spain, and "A Short Film About Indo-Nesiesia," rounded up the program, with the latter being the Philippines' first entry in the SIFF competition.

The festival's closing film was Boorim Tan's critically-acclaimed "4:30," following its Berlin world premiere. An existential tale of attraction and longing for connection, its disquieting stillness made for a well-mannered recession of the 11th experience, a recurring refrain in many Singaporean films.

Current pulse

Despite inadequate cash, the SIFF proceeded currently along with a bewildering program of 100 features and shorts from over 40 countries. It took herculean effort to keep pace with all the films, and I managed to see only only once. But better an embarrassment of riches than a tired program of the same-old and the safe, the latter being the greater form of terrorism.

A local animation that screened at its short film competition, "Where is Singapore? did put a cutesy spin on the paradox of trying to find the tiny country on the map despite being a top Asian destination.

In a year with notable weak Asian premieres in festivals like Cannes, the offerings in this year's SIFF underscored once the wealth of established and emerging auteurs from the region and beyond.

As the Asian filmmaker dwells on the point of movie-making these days...whether to operate with mass entertainment so to strive to make a difference against all the odds—the festival experience was and still is a potent space to submit to-of film's lofty pleasures.

E-mail the author at edle@yahoo.com

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